

Learning about Homelessness in British Columbia

A Guide for Senior High-School Teachers

Integrating homelessness issues into senior social sciences and humanities courses, including: Civics 11, Social Studies 11, Economics 12, Family Studies 10-12, First Nations 12, Law 12, and Social Justice 12

By
Jennifer Hales



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PROJECT TEAM

Author **Jennifer Hales** has written teachers' guides on social justice, environmental and other topics for groups such as World Vision Canada, the BC Teachers' Federation, the West Vancouver School District (#45), and Society for Partnership (SOPAR). Her work has been accredited by the Curriculum Services Canada (www.curriculum.org) and approved by the Alberta Ministry of Education. She is a former classroom teacher in BC and has a Master of Arts degree in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). If you are interested in a workshop or talk about homelessness and using this teacher's guide, please contact Jennifer by email at hales_jc@yahoo.ca.

Project Administrator **Krishna Pendakur** is a Professor of Economics at Simon Fraser University <http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/> and Co-Director of the Metropolis British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity, <http://mbc.metropolis.net>. He has done research on the economics of poverty, inequality and discrimination in Canada and around the world for the past 15 years.

Contributors **Elizabeth Byrne-Lo** has been teaching for 15 years in Burnaby School District #41. She has written articles for the online publication "Tools for Thought", has co-written and co-edited the Pivotal Voices teacher resource "Exploring Identity, Inclusion and Citizenship: The 1907 Vancouver Riots" and is the former editor of Dimensions, the publication of the British Columbia Social Studies Teachers' Association. Elizabeth wrote Activity 4 and reviewed the first draft of the resource.

Lyn Daniels is the District Vice-Principal, Aboriginal Education in the Burnaby School District #41. Lyn is Cree and belongs to the Kawacatoose First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. She has worked in several school districts in BC and for the Ministry of Education as a coordinator and consultant in Aboriginal Education. Lyn is currently working on a Doctor of Education degree at UBC in Policy and Educational Leadership. Lyn wrote Activity 10 and reviewed the first draft of the resource.

Erin Yakiwchuk enjoys her position as a business education/economics teacher at Burnaby Mountain Secondary School (School District #41), specializing in Advanced Placement Microeconomics and Macroeconomics. At present, she has taken a leave from the Burnaby School District to teach Advanced Placement Economics in Beijing at the RDFZ Xishan School, associated to the Renmin University of China. Erin wrote Activity 7 and contributed to Activities 3 and 6.

Reviewers

Gail Franklin	Coordinator, Fraser Valley Housing Network
Judy Graves	Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver
Cameron Gray	Former Managing Director, Social Development, City of Vancouver
Patrick Stewart	Chair, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee in BC and President, National Aboriginal Housing Association

INTRODUCTION

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, Family Studies 10-12, 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 is also appropriate for use in other courses and grade levels, and with other youth and adult groups.

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 this teaching 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 end 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 end homelessness.

Teaching about Sensitive Issues and Respecting Culture and Indigenous Worldviews

Teachers are encouraged to be aware of and sensitive to their students' economic and cultural backgrounds and, if possible, of issues they may be facing. Some students might find that a unit on homelessness touches them on a personal level - they may come from low-income families that struggle with housing affordability and other poverty-related issues, or may know family members or loved ones who are homeless, or may be homeless or at risk of homelessness themselves. People of Aboriginal origin are over-represented in homelessness and poverty across BC and Canada. Teachers are therefore encouraged to be particularly aware of, sensitive to and respectful of the needs, concerns and cultural protocols of Aboriginal students, and to be aware and respectful of indigenous worldviews. It is important that teachers approach the lessons in this resource with sensitivity and respect, and be prepared to help students deal with difficult emotions that arise. This may involve consulting with people who are knowledgeable about the issue and/or who are trained to counsel students. See also: Overview, p. 6-14, [BC First Nations Studies Teacher's Guide](#) by Kenneth Campbell.

Copyright and Black-Line Masters (BLM)

This resource is available at no cost and may be reproduced for not-for-profit educational use provided the source is properly acknowledged. Where relevant, photocopyable student worksheets, or black-line masters, are included after an activity. They are named and numbered accordingly (e.g. the first black-line master for Activity 1 is "Activity 1: BLM 1"). Where black-line masters contain material that has been reprinted and/or adapted with permission from another source, the original source must be included on the photocopy.

OVERVIEW OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Most of the Activities in the resource are general and will be of interest in and relevant to all courses. Some are specifically suited to certain courses. For example, Activity 7 (The Economics of Housing) is tailored to Economics 12. Each Activity can stand alone, however, most work better in conjunction with others. For example, a Law 12 teacher might do Activities 1, 2, 3 and 4 for an introduction to and an overview of homelessness, and Activities 8 and 9 for law-related components. Activities 8 and 9 are also relevant to Civics 11, Social Studies 11 and Social Justice 12. All teachers are encouraged to do Activities 11, 12 and 13 so that students can gain an understanding of policy tools that exist to end homelessness (Activities 11 and 12), and engage in actions to develop senses of agency and citizenship (Activity 13). Teachers are also encouraged to do Activity 10 given that Aboriginal people are so over-represented in homelessness across BC.

Activity 1: “There’s No Place Like Home” p. 47

Students will:

- Reflect on the meaning of “home”
- Develop an understanding of the term “homelessness”

Activity 2: Myth Buster - Ranking Activity p. 49

Students will:

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

Activity 3A: Homeless True/False and *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, a Film about Homelessness p. 55

Students will:

- Gain a general understanding of homelessness
- Learn specific facts about homelessness in BC, including the fact that Aboriginal people are over-represented among the homeless population
- Students may dispel some of the misunderstandings they have around homelessness and the population of homeless

OR if not showing the film:

Activity 3B: Homelessness True/False p. 64

Students will:

- Gain a general understanding of homelessness
- Learn specific facts about homelessness in BC, including the fact that Aboriginal people are over-represented among the homeless population
- Students may dispel some of the misunderstandings they have around homelessness and the population of homeless

Activity 4: Contributing Factors and Effects p. 71

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 5: Homeless Voices – Stories of Formerly Homeless Youth p. 84

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of the causes of youth homelessness and ways to end it

Activity 6: Could You Afford It? The Rent Reality p. 90

Students will:

- Analyze and understand the difficulty of finding affordable housing in your community

Activity 7: The Economics of Housing: Why Is Affordable Housing Difficult to Find? p. 97

Students will:

- Understand the influences that 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 8: The Rights Balloon (Best done before Activity 9) p. 105

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of human rights

Activity 9: Housing as a Human Right: The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Victoria (City) V. Adams Case, 2008, BCSC 1363* (Best done after Activity 8) p. 107

Students will:

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

Activity 10: Understanding the Life and Culture of Danse Crowkiller: Aboriginal Man who is Homeless p. 121

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 11: Is There Enough for Everyone? Distribution of Resources p. 131

Students will:

- Realize that when resources are not distributed equitably or equally, some people do not get a fair share and do not benefit equally
- Define 'equitable redistribution of resources'

Activity 12: We Can End Homelessness: Policy Tools to Solve the Problem p. 137

Students will:

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

Activity 13: Take Action p. 143

Students will:

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

Note: Activity 3A and Activity 10 are based on films. Instructions for ordering the films are on p. 46 and p. 147.

TEACHER BACKGROUNDER ON HOMELESSNESS

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WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

What is home?

Before defining homelessness, it helps to think about what it means to have a home. “Most Canadians recognize that having a home is essential to everything we value in life. Without a home, it is extremely difficult to meet basic physical needs or maintain family, friends, community involvement and work.”¹

Homelessness, therefore, can be described as the lack of these things that encompass what it means to have a home, including, but not limited to, the fact that you lack security and safety, that you have no place to call your own, that you are always the intruder into other people’s spaces, that you have no place for your things, and that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to maintain your physical and emotional health, relationships, work, school, treatment regimes or even regular food preparation.

ABSOLUTE OR STREET HOMELESSNESS

The term ‘absolute homelessness’ or ‘street homelessness’ refers to:

Those living in the streets: people who live on the street, in back lanes, parks, alcoves and similar public spaces

Those who spend their nights in emergency shelters: people who spend their nights in emergency shelters, safe houses or transition houses

The hidden homeless: A large number of homeless people do not live on the street or in shelters, but exist out of sight of, or *hidden* from, public view. They are people who do not have enough money to pay for their shelter. They live in places not fit for human habitation or move continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by friends, families or strangers, and tend not to have control over the length and conditions of their stay. The hidden homeless are sometimes referred to as ‘couch surfers’.

“They live in cars. They find temporary beds in church basements or abandoned buildings. They sleep on somebody’s couch. They are seniors on fixed incomes. They are adults with full-time jobs. Many are children.”²

While it is known that the hidden homeless exist, there is no reliable method to identify or quantify them and thus they may not be regarded by policy and decision makers. Nevertheless, they are part of the homeless population.³

AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

These are people who have some kind of shelter and typically pay for that shelter, but are at risk of becoming absolutely homeless because that shelter is not safe, secure or affordable – it may not provide good protection against bad weather, it may be over-crowded, and may not have adequate access to sanitary facilities, potable water, nutritious food, education, health services and work⁴. Those at risk of homelessness may be at imminent risk of eviction from their current home or may pay such a

¹ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 3, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

² *The Hidden Homeless*, Raising the Roof <http://www.hiddenhomeless.ca/>

³ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

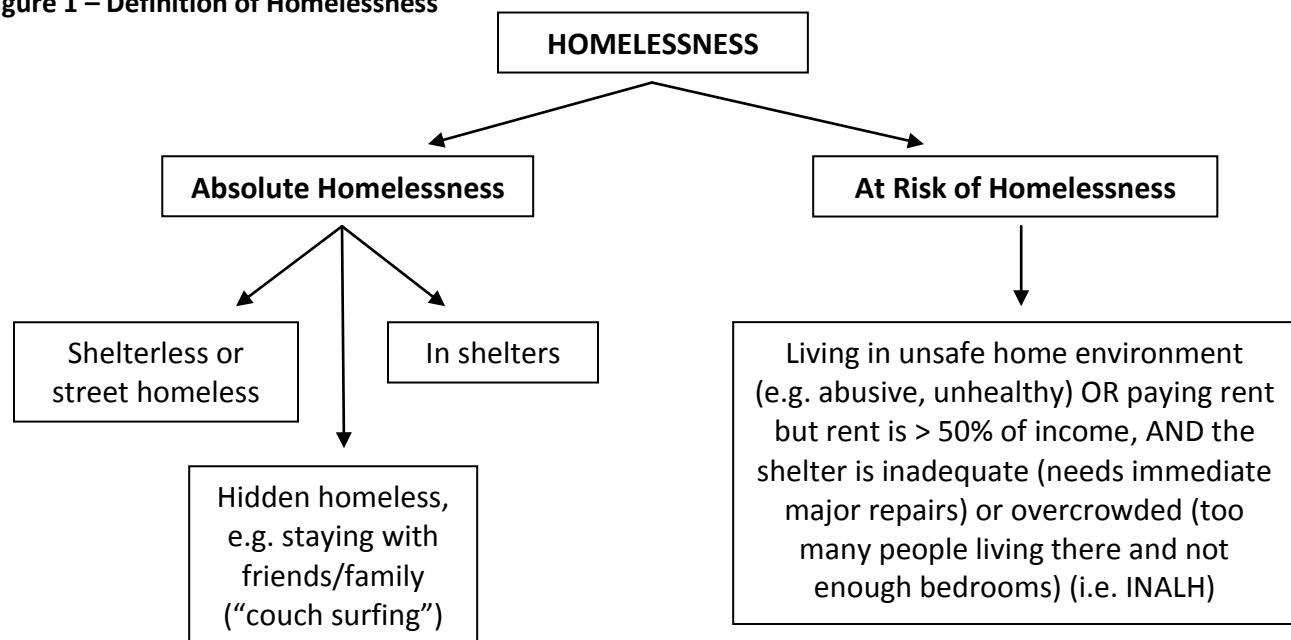
⁴ *Definition of Homelessness*, Parliamentary Research Branch, Government of Canada, 1999, <http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/modules/prb99-1-homelessness/definition-e.htm#The%20Search-txt>

large portion of their income - typically 50% or more - on housing that they are always at risk of not having enough to pay their rent.

Certain groups are more at risk of becoming absolutely homeless: people with special needs (including people with physical disabilities, mental illness, drug addictions, brain injuries, chronic illnesses, fetal alcohol syndrome/effect) particularly if they lose services that allow them to maintain their housing or if they need more supports as they age; victims of abuse; women fleeing abusive situations; people of Aboriginal origin; youth, especially those who are in or have experienced foster care; seniors; new immigrants and refugees.⁵

INALH - In Core Housing Need and Spending At Least Half Their Income on Shelter: One measure of those at risk of homelessness is the INALH concept developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)⁶. INALH households are those who are in 'core housing need'⁷ and who spend 50% or more of their income on shelter, leaving them at risk of homelessness.

Figure 1 – Definition of Homelessness



Adapted from: *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005⁸

FOR THIS GUIDE:

For the purposes of this guide, unless otherwise specified, the terms “homeless” and “homelessness” refer to those **people who are absolutely or street homeless** (i.e. people living on the street or spending their nights in shelters, safe houses and transition houses, and the hidden homeless).

⁵ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/62446.pdf?lang=en> and *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

⁷ According to CMHC (www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca), a household is in **core housing need** if its housing falls below at least one of the following standards: adequate in condition (not in need of major repairs), suitable in size (has enough bedrooms) and affordable (shelter costs are less than 30% of before-tax household income). As well, to be in core housing need, the household would have to spend 30% or more of its income to pay the average rent of alternative market housing that meets all three standards. A household that is **INALH** is in core housing need AND pays at least half of its income on shelter. INALH households are at risk of becoming absolutely or street homeless.

⁸ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 2, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

GLOSSARY OF HOUSING-RELATED TERMS

Unless otherwise specified, the following definitions come from BC Housing: www.bchousing.org/glossary

Affordable Housing: Housing is considered affordable if shelter costs account for less than 30% of before-tax household income. It includes housing provided by the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, as well as forms of housing tenure (rental, ownership and co-operative ownership), and temporary and permanent housing. It can refer to any part of the housing continuum from temporary shelters through transitional housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing or market homeownership.⁹

BC Housing: The provincial government agency responsible for subsidized housing in BC. BC Housing owns and manages older affordable housing for families, seniors, and people with disabilities, and provides rent subsidies for affordable non-profit and co-op housing developments and some private market units. www.bchousing.org

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): CMHC is the national housing agency of the federal government and insures residential mortgage loans, provides subsidies under federal housing programs, administers co-op operating agreements funded under federal programs, and conducts and publishes housing research. [See www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca]

Co-operative Housing: A housing development in which individual residents own a share in the co-operative. This share grants them equal access to common areas, voting rights, occupancy of an apartment or townhouse as if they were owners, and the right to vote for board members to manage the co-operative. Each member has one vote and members work together to keep their housing well-managed and affordable.

Core Housing Need: Households in core housing need are those individuals who currently reside in housing that is either in need of major repair [inadequate], does not have enough bedrooms for the size and makeup of the household [not suitable], or costs 30 percent or more of their total income [unaffordable], and who are unable to rent an alternative housing unit that meets these standards without paying 30 percent or more of their income. [Also see the [Canadian Housing Observer 2009](#) by CMHC, page 81) (See footnote 9 for full web address).

Emergency Housing: Short-stay housing of 30 days or less. Includes emergency shelters that provide single or shared bedrooms or dorm-type sleeping arrangements, with varying levels of support to individuals.

Group Home: A home that is shared by a number of tenants who are generally expected to participate in shared living arrangements and activities. There is usually 24-hour support staff on site.¹⁰

Hardest to House: Refers to people with more complex needs and multiple challenges when it comes to housing, such as mental illness(es), addiction(s), other conditions or disabilities, justice-system histories, etc.¹¹

Harm Reduction: A philosophy that focuses on the risks and consequences of a particular behaviour, rather than on the behaviour itself. In terms of substance use, it means focusing on strategies to reduce harm from high-risk use, rather than insisting on abstinence....With regard to housing, harm reduction means that tenants have access to services to help them address their substance use issues. It is based on the understanding that recovery is a long process, and that users need a stable living arrangement in order to overcome their addictions.¹²

⁹ *Canadian Housing Observer, 2009*, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), p. 15 <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/66663.pdf?fr=1267567133109>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Housing First: Housing First is an approach that focuses on immediately providing housing to homeless people and concurrently providing the needed supports and assistance.¹³

In Need and Spending At Least Half Their Income on Shelter (INALH): Those households who are in “core housing need” AND spend 50% or more of their income on shelter. INALH households are considered to be at risk of homelessness.¹⁴

Low Barrier Housing: Housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to live there. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to services. In housing this often means that tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol or other drugs, or from carrying on with street activities while living on-site, so long as they do not engage in these activities in common areas of the house and are respectful of other tenants and staff. These facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy.¹⁵

Non-Profit Housing: Rental housing that is owned and operated by community-based non-profit societies. The mandates of these societies are to provide safe, secure, affordable accommodation to households with low to moderate incomes. Most non-profit housing societies receive some form of financial assistance from government to enable them to offer affordable rents. Each society operates independently under the directions of a volunteer board of directors.

Private Market: Traditional rental housing that is run by private landlords rather than a housing program.¹⁶

Public Housing: This housing is jointly funded by the provincial and federal governments and predominantly managed by BC Housing. Most of these developments were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Social Housing: This housing includes both public housing and housing owned and managed by non-profit and co-operative housing providers. It is one category of affordable housing.

Subsidized Housing: This type of housing encompasses all types of housing in which the provincial government provides some type of subsidy or rental assistance, including public, non-profit and co-operative housing, as well as rent supplements for people living in private market housing. It also includes emergency housing and short-term shelters.

Supportive Housing: There is no limit on the length of stay. Provides ongoing supports and services to residents who cannot live independently and who are not expected to become fully self-sufficient. This form of housing may be located in a purpose-designed building or scattered site apartments.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO): Small, one-room apartments that are rented on a monthly or weekly basis. Tenants share common bathrooms and sometimes also share kitchen facilities.¹⁷ Some are poorly maintained and in disrepair.¹⁸ They are the least expensive housing that the market can provide.

Transitional Housing: Housing from 30 days to two or three years that includes the provision of support services, on- or off-site, to help people move towards independence and self-sufficiency. It is often called second-stage housing, and includes housing for women [with and without children] fleeing abuse [as well as housing for youth, people leaving detox who require support, people with multiple challenges who need support in order to live independently, refugee claimants]

¹³ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

¹⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/62446.pdf?lang=en>, and *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

¹⁵ From HeretoHelp: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/visions/housing-homelessness/bck/3>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Pivot Legal Society, www.pivotlegal.org/News/09-01-15--slumlords.html

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS IN BC?

“Any attempt to count the number of people without housing will be seriously flawed. No matter how thorough and expensive the enumeration, all methods for counting a mobile population with no fixed addresses can never claim to have counted everyone and to having avoided double counting. The question always remains: how many were missed or counted more than once?”

Dr. J. David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies and Professor, Faculty of Social Work University of Toronto¹⁹

The homeless are difficult to count:

Homeless counts are probably **undercounts** for at least three reasons:^{20 21 22}

1. Many people who would be considered homeless don't respond to or participate in homelessness counts, (i.e. they refuse to be interviewed, are asleep and cannot be roused, or are otherwise unconfirmed as homeless);
2. The homeless are difficult to find; and
3. Counts usually exclude the hidden homeless, including “couch surfers” and people in detoxification facilities, recovery houses, correctional facilities and hospitals who do not have a place to go when they leave.

“Homeless people find these little nooks or crannies where they're not going to be interrupted and asked to leave.... There's no accepted or consistent methodology for estimating the scope of the problem.”

Michelle Patterson, Scientist and Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008²³

¹⁹ *What is Homelessness? Question and Answer: Homelessness in Canada* by J. David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies and Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-home-QandA-index.cfm#11>

²⁰ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²¹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²² *We Need to Get Home: Report on Homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley, March 2008 Survey*, by Ron van Wyk, Mennonite Central Committee of BC, Anita van Wyk, Social, Culture and Media Studies, University of the Fraser Valley, and Nerida Bullock, Abbotsford

²³ *Metro Vancouver Homeless Count Hides Many* by Carlito Pablo, The Georgia Straight, April 10, 2008, <http://www.straight.com/article-140217/homeless-count-hides-many>

Keeping in mind that the homeless are difficult to count and that most counts are undercounts, the numbers of homeless people in BC and Metro Vancouver are approximately the following:

British Columbia: approximately 10,500 homeless

According to a 2008 report by Simon Fraser University²⁴, there were in 2007 about **10,500** people absolutely homeless in BC. This is roughly equivalent to the population of Williams Lake (approximately 10,744 in 2009) or of Saltspring Island (approximately 10,500 in 2008).

Metro Vancouver²⁵: 2660 homeless

According to the [2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count](#)²⁶, there are approximately **2660** people absolutely homeless in Metro Vancouver (Table 1), representing a 137% increase in homelessness from 2002, and a 22% increase from 2005 (Table 2). These are people who live in shelters, transition houses, and safe houses (1006 counted) or on the street (1574 counted) (Tables 2 and 3). People who couch surf and families doubling up with other families were included only if they were found, and are thus significantly underrepresented.

Table 1 – The [2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count](#), by Sub-Region:

Sub-Region	Number Homeless
Vancouver	1576
Surrey	402
New Westminster	124
North Van & District	123
Tri-Cities	94
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows	90
Burnaby	86
Langley	86
Richmond	56
Delta/White Rock	17
West Vancouver	4
Not stated	2
Total	2660

"I'm certain that for every homeless person that was counted there were three or four that weren't counted, that are living in the bushes, living in cars, in garages, in tents throughout the city."
 Judy Villeneuve, City Councillor and President, Homelessness and Housing Society, Surrey, BC, 2006²⁷

Source: 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count²⁸

²⁴ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²⁵ The following communities of Metro Vancouver were included in the 2008 count: Burnaby, City and Township of Langley, City of Vancouver and UBC, Coquitlam, Delta, District and City of North Vancouver, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, West Vancouver and White Rock.

²⁶ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁷ *Suburbs can't escape city's disturbing trend: Homelessness no longer restricted to downtown core* by Mark Hume, Globe and Mail, December 6, 2006, <http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20061206.wxbchomeless06/BNSStory/MARK+HUME>

²⁸ "For the purposes of the count, someone was considered homeless if they did not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay more than 30 days and if they did not pay rent.... People who were sofa surfing were included in the count of homeless persons if we found them. Sofa surfers as a population will be significantly undercounted using this methodology. Similarly, families that double up with other families due to financial hardship were not included in the count if they did not access services on that day." 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, p. 4-5.

Table 2 – Growth in number of homeless in Metro Vancouver from 2002 and 2005 to 2008

Homeless category	2002	2005	2008	% change 2002 to 2008	% change 2005 to 2008
Sheltered homeless	788	1047	1086	38%	3%
Street/service homeless	333	1127	1574	373%	40%
Total homeless	1121	2174	2660	137%	22%

Source: 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count

Table 3 – Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count by Age

Homeless category	Adults and unaccompanied youth		Accompanied children		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sheltered homeless	1006	39%	80	85%	1086	41%
Street/service homeless	1560	61%	14	15%	1574	59%
Total homeless	2566	100%	94	100%	2660	100%

Source: 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count

Other Towns and Rural Communities in BC²⁹

Figuring out the number of homeless people in rural communities in BC can be even more difficult. The Metro Vancouver region has done three homeless counts since 2002 (2002, 2005 and 2008). Smaller communities often lack the resources to do the same. In northern towns, homeless people can be particularly hard to find because cold temperatures drive people without housing to find indoor alternatives, such as couch surfing.^{30 31}

“While homelessness is most visible in the major metropolitan areas, smaller cities and the social service agencies within them also report an increase in the number of homeless people. Smaller communities tend not to have a reliable source of information that provides a picture of the extent of the problem. This lack of reliable data makes timely community action difficult and may contribute to an apparent lack of awareness among local officials and politicians of the real extent of homelessness.”

Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005³²

Some attempts at counting the homeless in towns outside of the Metro Vancouver area have occurred (See Table 4). For example, a “Homeless Needs Survey” completed in the Comox Valley in January 2008 revealed that in City of Courtenay, 250 people were absolutely homeless and 3100 people were at risk of homelessness³³.

²⁹ For more information on rural homelessness, see The Homeless Hub: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Rural-Populations-262.aspx>

³⁰ *Homeless Crisis Grows in BC's North* by Sean Condon, The Tyee, March 16, 2009 <http://www.no2010.com/node/871>, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2009/03/16/HomelessNorth/>

³¹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

³² <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

³³ *Comox Valley 2009 Quality of Life Report*, Section 2: Housing. <http://cvsocialplanning.ca/?p=quality-of-life>

Table 4 – Homeless Counts in Towns outside Metro Vancouver

City	Number of Absolute or Street Homeless	Year of Count
Abbotsford ³⁴	235	2008
Mission ³⁵	100	2008
Chilliwack ³⁶	98	2008
Agassiz-Harrison ³⁷	12	2008
Hope ³⁸	20	2008
Victoria ³⁹	1242	2007
Courtenay ⁴⁰	250	2008
Duncan ⁴¹	130	2008
Parksville/Qualicum ⁴²	25	2008
Port Alberni ⁴³	100-250	2008
Port Hardy ⁴⁴	30-40	2008
Nanaimo ⁴⁵	99	2005
Prince George ⁴⁶	1050	2007
Prince George ⁴⁷	450	2009
Kelowna ⁴⁸	400	2004
Kelowna ⁴⁹	279	2007
Kamloops ⁵⁰	168	2005
Smithers ⁵¹	250	2005

N.B.: Homeless counts are often conducted using different methods so comparisons between places and between years are not always possible.⁵² These totals most likely do not include the ‘hidden homeless’ and are most likely undercounts.

³⁴ *We Need to Get Home: Report on Homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley, March 2008 Survey*, by Ron van Wyk, Mennonite Central Committee of BC, Anita van Wyk, Social, Culture and Media Studies, University of the Fraser Valley, and Nerida Bullock, Abbotsford

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ www.ourwayhome.ca

⁴⁰ *Comox Valley 2009 Quality of Life Report*, Section 2: Housing. <http://cvsocialplanning.ca/?p=quality-of-life>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

⁴⁶ *10,000 Homeless In BC* by Monte Paulsen, The Tyee, November 30, 2007, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2007/11/30/HomelessCount/>

⁴⁷ <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/20090322182717/local/news/ndp-candidates-tackle-liberals-on-housing.html>

⁴⁸ *Homelessness Facts*, City of Kelowna, <http://www.kelowna.ca/CM/page1012.aspx>

⁴⁹ *City of Kelowna: Mayor’s Event to End Homelessness, Summary of Event* December 2007, www.city.kelowna.bc.ca/CityPage/Docs/PDFs//Community%20Planning/Report%20on%20Mayor's%20Event%20to%20End%20Homelessness.pdf

⁵⁰ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁵¹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

WHO IS HOMELESS IN BC?

“The face of homelessness is changing. In the past, the majority of the homeless were men who were dealing with addiction and mental health issues. That is no longer the case. The face of homelessness and of those at risk of homelessness is often youth, particularly aboriginal youth, single parents and women, as well as men.”

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society⁵³

“... It is no longer possible to speak of one profile of homelessness; rather there is a diversity of profiles. The homeless now include women, children, teen-aged youth, the mentally ill, newly arrived immigrants, refugees, women victims of spousal violence, persons recently released from prison, and casual workers. Each of the homeless subgroups may be further broken down by age, sex, ethnic origin and occupational status.”

Government of Canada, Parliamentary Research Branch⁵⁴

N.B.: The majority of the statistics in this section come from homeless counts conducted in the Metro Vancouver region in 2008⁵⁵ and in Kamloops in 2005⁵⁶. Reliable data on homeless populations in towns and cities across BC is difficult to find or unavailable. For data in your community, consult local municipal housing centres and organizations that support homeless people.

In general:

- **More men than women** comprise the population of **absolutely homeless people living on the street and in emergency shelters**. For example, men represent 76% of the street homeless population in the Metro Vancouver region (compared to 23% for women).⁵⁷
- However, women may be undercounted in homeless counts because **women tend to be part of the “hidden homeless” population**, couch surfing, living in substandard housing, or staying in inappropriate relationships, often because they do not feel safe being on the streets or in emergency shelters.
- The lack of adequate and secure housing particularly impacts **women**, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, homelessness, housing affordability problems, violence and discrimination in the private rental market.^{58 59}

⁵² *Homelessness: Clear Focus Needed (Report 2008/09: 16)*, by John Doyle, Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, March 2009, Victoria, BC. <http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs/2009/report16/homelessness-clear-focus-needed>

⁵³ *Surrey Homelessness*, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, <http://surreyhomelessnessandhousing.org/resources/homelessness-in-surrey/>

⁵⁴ *Composition of the Homelessness Population*, Parliamentary Research Branch, Government of Canada, 1999, <http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/modules/prb99-1-homelessness/composition-e.htm>

⁵⁵ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁵⁶ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁵⁷ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁵⁸ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

- In some places, such as Metro Vancouver, **homelessness among women is rising faster** than among men.⁶⁰
- The homeless tend to have a very high incidence of **chronic medical conditions**, such as asthma and diabetes.
- The homeless have a very high incidence of **mental illness**. Approximately 33% of homeless people suffer from mental illness; however estimates vary a lot, ranging from 25% to 50%. In some subgroups, the percentage can be higher. For instance, in Toronto in the late 1990s, the prevalence of mental illness among homeless women was 75%.⁶¹
- The homeless have a very high incidence of **drug addiction**. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, approximately 60% of homeless people reported having an addiction. More research is needed about addictions on the street to answer questions such as “are more people becoming homeless because of addictions or do homeless people become addicted once they are homeless?”⁶² The same is the case for mental illness.

“Many people become addicted to crack-cocaine after they become homeless because they are afraid that they will be robbed while they’re asleep. The drug keeps them awake.”

Judy Graves, Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver, 2010

- Substantial **overlap between drug addiction and mental illness** is common, with many people being diagnosed with both **severe addiction and mental illness (SAMI)**.⁶³
- Mental illness and addiction, as well as other chronic medical conditions such as asthma, are closely related to **high levels of stress**, particularly as a result of being isolated from others.
- The prevalence of **SAMI** varies among different sub-groups within the homeless population, with higher rates among **women and Aboriginal peoples**.^{64 65}

⁵⁹ For more information on homeless women, see The Homeless Hub: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Single-Women-265.aspx>

⁶⁰ *Executive Summary: Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Sept, 2008:

http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_Executive_Summary_FINAL_Sept_15.pdf

⁶¹ *Taking responsibility for homelessness: An action plan for Toronto*, Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force by A. Golden, W. Currie, E. Greaves and J. Latimer, Toronto, 1999.

⁶² *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁶³ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ In keeping with the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), we use “the term *Aboriginal people* to refer to the Indigenous inhabitants of Canada when we want to refer in a general manner to Inuit and to First Nations and Métis people, without regard to their separate origins and identities. The term *Aboriginal peoples* refers to organic political and cultural entities that stem historically from the original peoples of North America, rather than collections of individuals united by so-called ‘racial’ characteristics. The term includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (see section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*). *Aboriginal people* (in the singular) means the individuals belonging to the political and cultural entities known as ‘Aboriginal peoples’.” (Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1, 1996, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/rrc-eng.asp>)

- There is a high correlation between **traumatic brain injury**⁶⁶ and homelessness. In a 2008 Toronto study⁶⁷ of 904 homeless people, 53% had experienced a traumatic brain injury, and for 70% of these individuals, the first traumatic brain injury occurred before the onset of homelessness.
- **Aboriginal people** are massively over-represented in poverty and homelessness across BC.⁶⁸
- It is estimated that 41% of all **Aboriginal peoples** in BC are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless.⁶⁹ In Metro Vancouver in 2008, people of Aboriginal ancestry represented about 2% of the region's census population compared to 32% of the region's homeless population.⁷⁰ In Kamloops in 2005, people of Aboriginal ancestry represented about 5% of the region's census population, but 39% of the region's homeless population.⁷¹
- In Metro Vancouver, the **Aboriginal** homeless had a higher proportion of **women** (38%) than that of the total homeless population (27%).⁷²
- Almost half (45%) of the homeless **women** enumerated on count day in Metro Vancouver reported **Aboriginal** identity.⁷³
- The number of **homeless youth** is growing in BC and other parts of Canada. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, youth under 25 years of age comprised 15% of the total homeless population (representing 364 individuals). 74% of these youth were unaccompanied by an adult. Of these unaccompanied youth, 22% were children under the age of 19 (or 59 people) (representing 2.2% of the total homeless population). There were also 94 children accompanied by adults (approximately 4% of the total homeless population).⁷⁴ In Kamloops in 2005, 18 youth under the age of 19 were counted, representing 11% of that city's total homeless population.⁷⁵
- In Metro Vancouver, homeless **youth** more often reported **Aboriginal** identity than the total homeless population (41% of homeless youth said they were Aboriginal compared to 32% of the general homeless population).⁷⁶

⁶⁶ "Traumatic brain injury is caused by 'a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain' and most commonly results from falls, motor vehicle traffic crashes and assaults" (*Traumatic Brain Injury in the Homeless Population: A Toronto Study* by Stephen W. Hwang, Angela Colantonio, Shirley Chiu, George Tolomiczenko, Alex Kiss, Laura Cowan, Donald Redelmeier, & Wendy Levinson, Chapter 2.6 in *Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada* Edited by J. David Hulchanski, Philippa Campsie, Shirley B.Y. Chau, Stephen H. Hwang, Emily Paradis, Cities Centre Press, University of Toronto, 2009) Available: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/Documents/2.6%20Hwang%20et%20al.%20-%20Traumatic%20Brain%20Injury.pdf>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Aboriginal incomes in Canada*, by Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur, Simon Fraser University and University of Ottawa http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/Aboriginal_incomes_with_tabs.pdf

⁶⁹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

⁷⁰ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁷¹ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁷² *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁷⁶ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

- The homeless population tends to be **aging**. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 76% of the homeless population was aged 25 to 54 years of age (30% being 35 to 44 years, and 28% being 45 to 54 years), and 9% was over 55 years, with a senior defined as a person aged 55 and over.⁷⁷ In Kamloops in 2005, 55% of the homeless population was between the ages of 40 and 60 years. With the median age of 42 years, the homeless population in Kamloops was significantly “older” than the population as a whole. Homeless seniors are more likely to have medical conditions and physical disabilities than the total homeless population.⁷⁸
- **Long-term homeless:** The long-term homeless are individuals who have been homeless for a year or longer. It is the largest sub-group of homeless people (845 people in Metro Vancouver in 2008). The proportion of women in this sub-group rose from 18% in 2005 to 24% in 2008. Just over a third (34%) of the long-term homeless reported Aboriginal identity. The long-term homeless population was more likely to report panhandling and binning/bottle collection as sources of income and were more likely to have health conditions than the general homeless population.⁷⁹
- **Illegal activities as a source of income:** In Metro Vancouver in 2008, three percent of the general homeless population reported illegal activities as a source of income. A higher proportion of homeless youth (16%) mentioned illegal activities as a source of income than the general homeless population. As well, a higher proportion of women (15%) mentioned illegal activities as a source of income. Most of the women relying on illegal activities as a source of income said they were involved in prostitution.⁸⁰
- **Income assistance/welfare:** In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 43% of homeless people reported income assistance as a main source of income.⁸¹ In Kamloops in 2005, 34% reported being on income assistance.⁸² In Metro Vancouver, just over one-third of homeless youth reported income assistance as a source of income, which is lower than the general homeless population. In Metro Vancouver, more youth than the general homeless population reported having no income or reported panhandling as a source of income.⁸³
- **The working poor:** Contrary to popular belief, many homeless people work for an income. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 19% of the total homeless population (one in five people) and 27% of the sheltered population reported having full-time, part-time or casual employment. Even with an income, they still could not afford to rent a place in the region.⁸⁴ In Kamloops in 2005, 15% of homeless people had full, part-time or casual employment.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>
<http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁷⁹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

⁸³ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

WHERE DO HOMELESS PEOPLE SLEEP?

Outside or in Unsafe Dwellings: People who are street homeless sleep in a variety of places, typically outside or in unsafe dwellings (or 'squats') - on park benches, in nooks and crannies in stairwells and doorways, in bank machine outlets and bushes, in bus shelters, on sidewalk grates, in parking garages, under bridges, in cars, in tents and other makeshift shelters in abandoned industrial sites, parks, caves and underground tunnels, on factory or store rooftops, and in abandoned buildings⁸⁶. These places are not safe, and they are rarely warm, dry or comfortable. Where homeless people sleep can leave them vulnerable to violence, theft, illness and sleep-deprivation.

Emergency Shelters: Some homeless people sleep in emergency shelters and drop-in centres that are funded and run by provincial and municipal governments, churches, and other community groups. As well as offering homeless people a temporary, short-term place to sleep, shelters often also provide food and other services and can connect homeless people to support services, such as health, addiction counselling, advocacy and housing support.

Shelters typically have restricted hours, such as from 6pm to 10am, and people typically enter on a first-come-first-served basis. Some shelters cater to men only, some to women only, some to youth only, and some to men, women and children. Not all shelters allow shopping carts and pets, nor do they all have laundry facilities. Shelters in Metro Vancouver typically have 30 to 50 beds; the largest has 100 beds. In the Metro Vancouver region in March 2008, there was a total of approximately 1000-1100 shelter beds available⁸⁷ (compared to 2660 homeless people enumerated on the night of the count). Since then, more shelter beds have been made available, particularly during extreme weather conditions.⁸⁸ The Shelter Directory for the Metro Vancouver region can be viewed here: <http://www.gvss.ca/Directory.html>

"While shelters are necessary to accommodate emergency needs, they do not provide long-term solutions to homelessness....Many shelter users occupy beds on a repeat or prolonged basis because appropriate housing is not available."⁸⁹

Transition Houses typically provide longer-term, safe and supportive housing for people who are working towards the goal of living independently in the community. These may be women who are fleeing abusive situations, people who are mentally ill, or people recovering from addictions. The length of time a person stays in a transition house can vary and is typically dependent on individual needs. Support staff members are on-site to provide an array of services. Many transition houses provide a place where people can re-establish their self worth, learn skills, and re-discover their place in society.

Couch Surfing: Approximately half of BC's homeless population is estimated to "couch surf", that is, they sleep in the homes of friends or family (and sometimes strangers), but don't have a place of their own. In northern communities where the weather is colder, couch surfing is more common. In particular, women and youth tend to couch surf rather than live in situations that could be more dangerous, such as on the streets or in shelters.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Homelessness: How to end the national crisis* by Jack Layton, Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008.

⁸⁷ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁸⁸ Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, <http://www.gvss.ca/About.html>

⁸⁹ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 7, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

⁹⁰ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

Why do some homeless people sleep on the street when they could stay in a shelter?

There are several reasons why homeless people may not stay in a shelter^{91 92}:

- Shelters can be unsafe places where people are vulnerable to being harmed physically and/or sexually. Some people find it safer to sleep outdoors.
- Shelters may be unclean and noisy.
- Many shelters have strict rules, including restrictions on the length of time a person can stay. Some people find it difficult to live within the shelter's rules or with the way that shelter staff treat them. Shelter curfews can be especially problematic for women working the streets.
- Theft can be common in shelters.
- Sometimes people want to stay in a shelter, but are turned away either because of it being full or because they are inappropriate for the shelter. An individual is considered "inappropriate" for a shelter if they are too young to stay in an adult shelter or too old to stay in a youth shelter, if there are no beds available for their gender, or if they are intoxicated or "high". While low-barrier⁹³ shelters do exist, they are insufficient for current needs.
- Some homeless people don't know where shelters are or how to get to them, or they arrive too late to be allowed in.
- Some shelters don't allow pets or shopping carts containing a person's belongings, and there is a lack of secure storage space for valuables.
- Some people are too proud or embarrassed to stay in a shelter, or say there are people who need it more than they do.
- For people who are with a partner or family, finding shelter where they can stay together can be difficult. Most shelters do not allow couples to stay together.
- Many shelters are co-ed (men and women sleeping in the same room). Some women may not want to sleep in a room with men.
- According to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, the proportion of Aboriginal people was higher among the street homeless than the sheltered homeless. On the night of the count, 73% of the Aboriginal homeless population did not stay in a shelter, safe house or transition house. This suggests that shelters do not serve the Aboriginal population well, due to perceived discrimination, religious beliefs and cultural intolerance.
- Some people would rather sleep outside.

⁹¹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

⁹² *Homeless Voices, Part 1: What We Heard from Metropolitan Vancouver Residents Who Have Experienced Homelessness*, Prepared for the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy by James Pratt Consulting, October 10, 2007, <http://www.gvss.ca/PDF/Including%20Homeless%20Voices%20report%20Oct%2011,%202007.pdf>

⁹³ "Low Barrier Housing: Housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to live there. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to services. In housing this often means that tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol or other drugs, or from carrying on with street activities while living on-site, so long as they do not engage in these activities in common areas of the house and are respectful of other tenants and staff. Low-barrier facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy. See below for more about harm reduction." From: HeretoHelp, a BC information resource for individuals and families managing mental health and substance abuse problems. Available: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/visions/housing-homelessness/bck/3>

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF HOMELESSNESS?

Being homeless impacts every area of a person's life. People who have no home or live in precarious housing are at risk of a number of problems that can deteriorate quality of life. These problems include difficulty securing physical safety, protecting personal property, maintaining emotional ties, obtaining services, finding a job, and obtaining education or training.

Without a decent private space, it can be difficult for a homeless person to prepare for work or school or to provide and receive care. You can see how easy it can be for someone to remain in extreme poverty under these conditions.

"The longer people are street homeless, the more homelessness becomes an entrenched way of life, and people lose the ability to be re-integrated into society. Maintaining family connections, community contacts, or job readiness becomes increasingly difficult as the skills for these activities gets replaced with survival street skills."

Homeless Action Plan, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 3⁹⁴

Lack of safety: Violence, theft, crime

One of the first and most visible consequences of being homeless is where homeless people sleep and live. But these places are not usually safe. Where homeless people sleep and live can leave them vulnerable to violence, theft, and crime. Women who are homeless can be particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Impact on physical and mental health

- The death rate among homeless people is higher than among non-homeless. In 2007, the death rate among homeless persons was 21.3 per 10,000 people. The death rate in the general population for 2006 was 17.9 per 10,000 people.⁹⁵
- Rates of Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, cancer, tuberculosis and other illnesses and the incidence of traumatic brain injuries are disproportionately high among people who are homeless.
- In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, it's estimated that one in three people is infected with HIV, which is on par with some of the poorest nations in the world.⁹⁶
- Many people living in the streets show signs of severe depression, describe themselves as depressed, and say they often think of suicide.⁹⁷
- Many homeless people are perpetually sleep-deprived.
- Malnutrition: While charitable food programs (food line-ups, food banks, drop-in centre meals, etc) are numerous in many communities, the nutritional value of the food is often poor, with a focus on refined starch, sugar and fat, and lacking in protein, vegetables and fruit.^{98 99} Diets lacking in nutrition are

⁹⁴ <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

⁹⁵ *Deaths among homeless individuals, 2006-2007*, Office of the Chief Coroner, BC, www.thetyee.ca/docs/coronersreport.pdf

⁹⁶ *Plan to reduce Downtown Eastside HIV rate*, September 15, 2008, CTV BC News,

www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20080915/BC_rhonda_downtown_080915?hub=BritishColumbiaHome

⁹⁷ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

⁹⁸ *Let them eat starch: In the food lines of Vancouver we found scant nourishment*, by Graham Riches and Judy Graves, The Tyee, Aug 28, 2007 <http://thetyee.ca/Life/2007/08/28/FoodLines/>

⁹⁹ *Homelessness: How to end the national crisis* by Jack Layton, Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008, p. 74-75.

linked to a number of health problems, including poor mental health.^{100 101} It is extremely difficult for people in these circumstances to find wholesome food and enough of it to keep them healthy.

“Many of those who depend on the food lineups are ill.... These are people in need of a more nutritious diet than the rest of us, not less.”

Graham Riches and Judy Graves, 2007¹⁰²

Isolation and alienation

Homeless people are frequently alone and living on the margins of society without stable, caring relationships. This can lead to isolation, alienation and deep and abiding loneliness.

Low social skills and low adaptive function

Adverse events in the lives of homeless individuals as well as the underlying causes of homelessness may have left them with lasting or permanent cognitive impairments, decreased ability to make good judgements and decisions on their own, frequent failure to keep up or fit in with those around them, and ineffective strategies for getting what they want and need in a socially approved way.

Impacts on job opportunities

Homelessness cuts off opportunities for participating in the regular job market – where do people who are homeless obtain and store decent clothes? Where do they take a shower? If they are sleep deprived and malnourished, will they find it difficult to keep appointments and perform on the job? Many homeless people therefore turn to those job opportunities that remain available to them. These tend to be marginal opportunities, such as binning and panhandling, or criminal activities, such as the drug trade.

Impact on education

Just as it is hard to find and keep a job while homeless, it is also hard to go to school – where do homeless youth do their homework? Where do they keep their belongings? If they are sleep deprived and malnourished, how will they perform in school? If a person doesn't have money for rent, where will they find money to get job training?

Facing intolerance, stigma and discrimination

“Despite the legal prohibition of discrimination with respect to housing, investigations into social and private housing in Canada reveal the persistence of discrimination against some groups, including on the basis of race, country of origin, sex, age, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, disability and social condition (including poverty and reliance on social assistance).”

Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Mission to Canada, 2009¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Food insecurity is associated with nutrient inadequacies among Canadian adults and adolescents by S.I. Kirkpatrick, S.I. and V. Tarasuk, American Society for Nutrition, The Journal of Nutrition 138: 604-612, March 2008,

<http://jn.nutrition.org/cgi/content/abstract/138/3/604>

¹⁰¹ Do Homeless Youth Get Enough to Eat? by Stephen Gaetz, the Homeless Hub, <http://homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Do-Homeless-Youth-Get-Enough-to-Eat-46127.aspx>

¹⁰² Let them eat starch: In the food lines of Vancouver we found scant nourishment, by Graham Riches and Judy Graves, The Tyee, Aug 28, 2007 <http://thetyee.ca/Life/2007/08/28/FoodLines/>

¹⁰³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

Homeless people often report facing intolerance, stigma and discrimination by landlords in the private market, agency staff, service providers and the community.¹⁰⁴ For example,

- Many face barriers getting onto waitlists for housing and are disadvantaged when there is no local system for coordinating access to subsidized units¹⁰⁵
- Many are labeled as and gain reputations for being 'undesirable tenants' or 'difficult' ¹⁰⁶
- Some landlords in the private market screen out tenants based on their social condition or source of income (including social assistance), refuse to rent to single mothers, teenage mothers, families with children, women leaving abusive situations, visible minorities or new immigrants, refuse to accommodate persons with disabilities, deny accommodation to youth¹⁰⁷ and discriminate against people of Aboriginal origin¹⁰⁸

Low self-esteem and lack of self worth

The isolation, alienation and deprivation of homeless living, along with the inability to meet basic needs, can create a high sense of stress and failure in homeless individuals which in turn can lead to low self-esteem. The feeling of worthlessness that low self-esteem generates can prevent any individual from functioning successfully. In homeless people, it can block the motivation to find and secure housing, a job, relationships, and other basic needs. The failure to secure needs can lead to despair and worsen a person's already poor view of him/herself.¹⁰⁹

"When a person is deprived of a home, she is deprived of personhood. She loses the ability to hope, plan and dream – all of those things that make us human."

Judy Graves, Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver, 2009

"If you always feel bad about yourself, how can you feel good about yourself? If no one loves you, how do you learn to love?"

Kate Gibson, Executive Director, WISH Drop-In Centre, Vancouver, 2009

¹⁰⁴ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ *Social work outreach to homeless people and the need to address issues of self-esteem*, by F.A. Diblasio, & J.R. Belcher in *Health and Social Work*, Vol. 18, 1993 <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5000231161>

WHY ARE PEOPLE HOMELESS?

In the 1970s and 1980s there was barely any visible homelessness in the cities and towns across BC. What has changed? Why are so many more people homeless today?

People are vulnerable to homelessness as a result of a *combination* of factors:

1. They lack income, and
2. They live in a place where rents are high and there is a low supply of affordable housing, and
3. They do not have access to a range of well-coordinated support services if they need them.

Figure 2 –
A combination of factors contributes to homelessness



The Role of the Market and of Government

It is important to realize that the homelessness we see on the streets today and have seen over the past decade is a *new* phenomenon. It has emerged as the product of two major trends: first, market forces have increased economic inequality in Canada; and, second, successive governments have made decisions that have left our society's most vulnerable people without access to income, affordable housing and support services.

1. LACK OF INCOME

A) ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Over the last 30 years, all rich countries including Canada have seen increased economic inequality. Despite overall economic growth in BC and Canada, and although *average* incomes have risen slowly over time, the incomes of people at the bottom of the income distribution have stagnated or fallen¹¹⁰. This means that they have less money available to spend on housing and other necessities, and may not have enough to sustain a reasonable standard of living.

B) GOVERNMENT POLICY

One of the characteristics of the Canadian mixed-market economy is the role of government in influencing the economy "in an attempt to rectify some of the failures of the market system"¹¹¹. The federal and provincial

¹¹⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹¹¹ Economics: A Canadian Perspective by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

governments develop programs to **redistribute** income in favour of the less fortunate in order to reduce poverty and to ensure that all members of society live safe, healthy, secure lives.

Our governments do this by transferring income and other resources from people who have a lot of money to people who have little or nothing. In other words, resources flow down the 'distribution of well-being', from rich people to poor people. This is called progressive redistribution.

One of the main reasons that we see so many more homeless people in BC today is because of changes to federal and provincial government programs that provide income to the poorest people in our society.

"Our federal finance department issues an annual report called Fiscal Reference Tables [providing]...30- and 40-year summaries of trends. These indicate how much capacity we have as Canadians to address serious social problems. One example is the trend in federal programs that provide support for (direct transfers to) individuals and families. This spending equalled about 5% of the GDP through the 1970s and 1980s, reaching 6% in 1993. Last year it was 3.8% of GDP. The trend is the same with federal transfers to other levels of government. It averaged about 4% of GDP in the 1970s and 1980s. It is now about 3% of GDP."

Dr. J. David Hulchanski, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, 2009¹¹²

The governments transfer or redistribute income raised from taxes to poor people by writing them cheques. Income transfers to individuals include income assistance (or welfare) delivered by the provincial government, and also a large child tax benefit system delivered by the federal government through the income tax system. The provincial government also influences income levels through minimum wage and training wage policies.

Example 1 - Changes to Income Assistance in BC

The purchasing power of income assistance has declined: Income assistance rates in BC have not kept pace with the cost of living. While incomes at the bottom end of the income distribution have stagnated or declined, the income assistance rates of the provinces across the country have also declined, with the result that income assistance rates relative to cost of living are at their lowest level since the mid-1980s¹¹³ and, in all provinces, are far below Statistic Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (\$14,303/year before taxes for a single person in a rural area and \$20,778/year before taxes for a single person in a city with a population over 500,000).^{114 115 116}

Since April 1, 2007, the rate of income assistance in BC for a single adult has been \$610/month¹¹⁷ (\$7230/year). For a single adult with disabilities, the rate is \$906/month (\$10,872/year).

Of the \$610 monthly income assistance for a single adult, a maximum of \$375 is allocated to shelter costs¹¹⁸. A person receives this shelter component only if they are paying rent (so someone in an emergency shelter will

¹¹² *Homelessness in Canada: Past, Present, Future* by Dr. J. David Hulchanski, keynote address at the Growing Home: Housing and Homelessness in Canada Conference, University of Calgary, February 18, 2009, p. 7-8, www.cprn.org/documents/51110_EN.pdf

¹¹³ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada*. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *Low income before tax cut-offs for economic families and persons not in economic families, 2005*, Statistics Canada, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/tables/table-tableau-18-eng.cfm>

¹¹⁶ *Low income after-tax cut-offs for economic families and persons not in economic families, 2005*, Statistics Canada, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/tables/table-tableau-17-eng.cfm>

¹¹⁷ *Income Assistance Rate Fact Sheet*, Government of BC, http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2007/pdf/increase_rate_tables.pdf and http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2007/increase_table.htm and <http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2007/increase.htm>

¹¹⁸ *BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables*, Ministry of Housing and Social Development, <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm#h>

not receive the \$375) leaving \$235 (the support component) for all other expenses (food, transportation, bills, etc). In Metro Vancouver, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$935/month and for a bachelor is \$755/month. In BC, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$862 and for a bachelor is \$703¹¹⁹. Thus, there is virtually nowhere that a single person can rent for \$375/month.

“Welfare rates have not kept pace with the rate of inflation, and people on income assistance are living deep in poverty.”

Nancy Henderson, Executive Director, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), June 2009¹²⁰

A 2008 study by the Fraser Institute¹²¹ computed the amount of money necessary to survive for a year without endangering one's health. They found that a minimal poverty line for a single adult in 2007 in Canada was about \$10,520 per year, suggesting that *single individuals on income assistance need approximately 35-50% more money than current rates just to survive.*

Changes in eligibility rules make it harder to obtain income assistance in BC: Not only are income assistance rates low relative to the cost of living, but, in 2001, the BC government introduced new rules to the income assistance program, making it more difficult to navigate through the system and to receive income assistance.

As a result, some people no longer qualify for income assistance according to the new eligibility criteria, and many others have given up applying because the process is too difficult and takes too long – even though they are eligible to receive it. Although the provincial government has since removed some of the barriers to getting income assistance, many who are eligible still do not get it. When people are cut off from income assistance, they cannot even afford a room in a single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel, the least expensive housing that the market can provide. Without money to pay rent, moving inside is impossible.

“After coming into power, the BC Liberal Party changed the income assistance programs, making it much harder for poor people to access income assistance, the most critical source of income for the homeless and those at risk. The government instituted a 2-year grace period in 2002. There was a homeless count in 2002 and a second in 2005. The count in 2005 was twice as high as in 2002 because of the shift in income assistance rules.”

Cameron Gray, Former Managing Director, Social Development, City of Vancouver, 2010

“Changing access to welfare [income assistance] would have a significant effect on reducing the homelessness that we see on the streets every day. It would then be possible for people to have money for rent and move inside.”

Homeless Action Plan, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 6¹²²

¹¹⁹ *Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights*, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Spring 2009 http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64487/64487_2009_B01.pdf

¹²⁰ *Welfare Rates Forcing People into ‘Deep Poverty’* by John Bermingham, Staff Reporter, The Province, June 24, 2009 <http://vancouverfoodbank.blogspot.com/2009/06/welfare-rates-forcing-people-into-deep.html>

¹²¹ *What is Poverty? Providing Clarity for Canada* by Chris Sarlo, The Fraser Institute, May 2008, http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/What_is_Poverty.pdf

¹²² *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

Example 2 – Low Minimum Wage and Training Wage in BC

Many people who are homeless are employed. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 19% of the total homeless population (about one in five people) and 27% of the sheltered population reported having full-time, part-time or casual employment.¹²³ In Kamloops in 2005, 15% of homeless people had full, part-time or casual employment.¹²⁴ Even with an income, they still could not afford a place to rent.

It is likely that they are working for minimum wage or only slightly more. In 2001, the BC provincial government increased the hourly minimum wage in BC from \$7.60 to \$8, the rate at which it remains today in 2010, and currently the lowest rate in Canada.¹²⁵ Also in 2001, the BC government introduced a ‘first job’ or training wage of \$6 an hour, which applies to the first 500 hours (about three months) worked in any job and applies to all new workers.¹²⁶

Not only are these rates low in absolute terms (a full-time employee earning minimum wage would make about \$14,000 per year), but the value of minimum wage has declined over the past 30 years. In 1975 a person earning minimum wage would earn 122% of the poverty line. Today, minimum wage is about 80% of the poverty line for a single person.¹²⁷

C) UNFORTUNATE OR DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE

Sometimes, people are poor because of unfortunate or difficult circumstances beyond their control which impact their ability to earn an income. Difficulties can happen to anyone, but they can leave a person poor and at risk of homelessness *when that person has no forms of support or income*.

These circumstances can include job loss; long-term unemployment; substance abuse; mental illness; physical illness; disability; marital/family breakdown and violence; childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse; brain damage through an accidental head injury; being born with foetal alcohol syndrome; history of foster, group and institutional care; neglect in childhood; low levels of education; history of reading and learning difficulties; untreated systemic disease; and many others.

Any number of things can happen, all of which can impact a person’s ability to earn an income. This does not mean that all people experiencing some sort of misfortune will be poor. Rather, people who are poor tend to have had something happen to them that makes it hard for them to earn an income and afford housing and, possibly, hard for them to live independently without support services in the housing that is available to them. These factors can leave them extremely vulnerable to homelessness.

Each misfortune can also lead to, as well exacerbate, others, so that one person can have many factors in his or her background that make it more and more difficult for the person to earn an income. The Province of BC uses the term “Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers” to recognize individuals who are unable to achieve financial independence because of specific and severe multiple barriers to employment.¹²⁸

¹²³ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness,

www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

¹²⁴ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

¹²⁵ *Current and forthcoming minimum hourly wage rates for experienced adult workers in Canada*, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Government of Canada, <http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt1.aspx?lang=eng>

¹²⁶ *Current and forthcoming minimum hourly wage rates for young workers and specific occupations*, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Government of Canada, <http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt3.aspx?lang=eng>

¹²⁷ *Backgrounder on housing and homelessness*, Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), 2007,

http://miketodd.typepad.com/waving_or_drowning/files/ccap_backgrounder_on_housing_and_homelessnes.pdf

¹²⁸ *Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers*, BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development, <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/ppmb.htm>

2. HIGH RENTS AND LOW SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Why are rents high?

Rents are high because, while the demand for rentals has remained high, the supply of rentals has declined (supply and demand – for a fixed demand, if the supply decreases, then the price rises).

Why is the supply of rental and other affordable housing units low?

The supply of rental and other affordable housing units (including social and cooperative housing and other low-cost housing) is low because **governments** and **developers in the private housing market** stopped building them. In fact, we have had a shrinking supply of affordable housing and rental units for a few decades, particularly as the existing stock of low-cost units has worn out.

A) GOVERNMENT POLICY: Decrease in the supply of government funded affordable housing

Federal government - In 1993, the federal government ended Canada's national housing program. This program used to provide funds to each province to build affordable housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government built a lot of housing, financed a lot of housing and supported socially-mixed housing developments, cooperative housing and other forms of low-cost housing across Canada. During those years, there was very little homelessness across Canada. With the decentralization of federal responsibilities starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, the federal government stopped providing housing and let provincial governments take control. In 1998, the mayors of the largest Canadian cities declared homelessness a national disaster¹²⁹. We have continued to see a great increase in homelessness since then.

"Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a national housing strategy."
Miloon Kithari, United Nations, 2009¹³⁰

Bill C-304, a bill calling for a National Housing Strategy was put before the House of Commons by Libby Davies¹³¹, MP for Vancouver East. The Bill is "an Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians"¹³². It aims to bring "all levels of government, Aboriginal communities and civil society together to develop a national housing strategy"¹³³. The Bill was first tabled in the House of Commons in February 2009. It is up for final debate and vote in October 2010.¹³⁴

BC provincial government - BC Housing, the provincial crown agency that develops, manages and administers subsidized housing options in BC, was actively building affordable social housing in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, BC Housing stopped building affordable, subsidized housing except for seniors. Only recently has BC Housing started building units again, specifically for people who are at risk of homelessness. As a result of BC Housing's lowered activity over the last decade, there has been an overall drop in the supply of affordable housing units.

¹²⁹ *Housing and Parliamentary Action*, Parliamentary Research Branch, Government of Canada, 1999, <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/modules/prb99-1-homelessness/housing-e.htm>

¹³⁰ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹³¹ Libby Davies, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East: www.libbydavies.ca

¹³² Bill C-304, Third Session, 40th Parliament, 59 Elizabeth II, 2010, http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Bills/403/Private/C-304/C-304_2/C-304_2.PDF

¹³³ *What Does Bill C-304 Do?* Libby Davies, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East: www.libbydavies.ca/bill_c304

¹³⁴ LEGISinfo, Parliament of Canada, www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/lop/legisinfo/index.asp?Language=E&Session=22&query=5708&List=toC

B) PRIVATE HOUSING MARKET: Decrease in the supply of affordable rental units in private housing market

Condominiums versus rentals - Prior to the mid-1970s, private developers built apartment buildings primarily for rent. Essentially, this was because there was no law to govern how people could own a building in common. The easiest solution at that time was to have one owner, and that owner would rent out all the apartments to different people.

Then, starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s, provincial and city governments began supporting the creation of *condominiums*, which are buildings with multiple units, each of which is owned by someone different. This legal innovation (first put into law in BC in 1966 in the form of the Strata Titles Act¹³⁵) essentially eliminated the advantage of building apartment buildings for rent. Since that time, almost all privately built apartment buildings in Canada have been condominiums rather than rentals.

People who live on low incomes don't tend to buy homes, such as condominiums, because buying a home requires a lot of money all at once. Low-income people are more likely to rent than to buy. If rentals and other forms of low-cost housing are not being built, the supply declines as the existing stock wears out. In a place like Vancouver and some other parts of BC, where the demand for housing has continued to be high, when the supply declines, the price of rents increases (for a fixed demand, when the supply of something decreases, the price rises). Decreased supply causing increased rents means there are fewer housing options available for low-income people. The people with the lowest incomes are more likely to be vulnerable to ending up on the streets.

'Building booms' of new expensive housing - Increased economic inequality (seen in all rich countries over the past three decades) has resulted in a greater number of rich people living in big cities like Vancouver and elsewhere in BC. In cities where land is scarce this has resulted in rising land prices. Since housing uses land, this has pushed up the price of housing (including rentals) in general.

Because wealthy people can afford to pay for expensive new housing, these cities have experienced large 'building booms' of expensive new housing as well as the conversion and renovation of old housing into expensive housing that is 'just like new', or the demolition of old housing that is replaced with expensive new housing. As a result, older, less expensive housing becomes scarce, and the older housing that remains becomes more expensive (given stable demand, the decreased supply of less expensive older housing leads to a growth in its price). The result in a city like Vancouver and some other places in BC has been a scarcity of less expensive housing. And the price of that 'less expensive' housing that remains has become very high.¹³⁶

Effect of rent control¹³⁷ - Another legal device that may affect the price of rents and the supply of rentals is rent control. Rent control is great for people who already have rental accommodation---their rents don't rise quickly. However, where rents are controlled, but owned prices are not, private developers have a further reason to favour building accommodation they can sell to owners rather

¹³⁵ "British Columbia enacted the first Strata Titles Act in 1966. This is a piece of legislation that governs how the Strata system works. A second Strata Titles Act replaced the first in 1974. From 1980 through mid-2000, the legislation was called the Condominium Act. On July 1, 2000, The Strata Property Act replaced the Condominium Act. This legislation defines how all strata titles must work in BC today. Since 1966, developers in BC have created more than 840,000 strata lots, with strata title now applying well beyond the original apartment buildings to include townhouses and even subdivisions of single family houses. The first strata act originated in the state of New South Wales, Australia in 1961, in order to better handle the ownership of apartment blocks. Prior to that, ownership was divided by company title, which caused difficulties when owners applied for mortgages" (information from Lance Jakubec, Senior Consultant, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, email communication, August 2010).

¹³⁶ For more on this, see Mansur, Quigley, Raphael, and Smolensky 2002, <http://urbanpolicy.berkeley.edu/pdf/MQRS0602PB.pdf>

¹³⁷ More generally, rent control, defined typically as a ceiling on the annual increase that a landlord can charge, holds down the rents for people *already* in a rental apartment, but raises rents for people who are outside the rent-controlled market.

than building rental units. Over time, this reduces the amount of rental stock that private builders want to build. Consequently, rent control is a double-edged sword when it comes to low-cost housing--it keeps rents low, but also keeps supply low.

Overall, the changes in federal and provincial government housing policies along with changes in the private housing market have resulted in a decrease of affordable housing units and high rents. The decrease in the number of affordable housing units, including low-cost rentals, relative to the number of owned more expensive houses and units, including condominiums, favours rich people. Affordable housing options for low-income people become relatively scarce and their prices rise. Being very poor in an environment where rents are high and where there are few or no low-cost housing options can leave a person at risk of homelessness.

“...most observers agree that, even as the Canadian economy expanded in the late 1990s, a growing number of Canadians found that tough income and rental market conditions virtually slammed the door on their hopes of finding any shelter, whatsoever.”

Don Drummond, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, TD Bank, 2003¹³⁸

3. LACK OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Many homeless people, particularly those with persistent multiple barriers (see page 28), are homeless because they cannot manage their affairs effectively without support. Many have substance addictions; many have or show symptoms of a mental illness; many have multiple challenges. Generally, when support services are lacking, hard to access or poorly coordinated, homeless individuals may find it difficult or impossible to get off the streets and into housing, or to remain housed once in housing.

“The upshot is that a certain group of people can’t and may never be able to take adequate care of themselves or their affairs. Without consistently caring and supportive relationships with more able and responsible people, chronically homeless individuals with persistent multiple barriers are vulnerable to every kind of predator. This group predictably ends up on the street, serving time, and/or dying early because of illness or violence. The missing relationships are what we’re trying to compensate for by providing ‘supportive services’.”

Gail Franklin, Coordinator, Fraser Valley Housing Network, 2010

A high percentage of homeless people have a mental illness. The BC government used to house many people with mental illness in institutions, such as Riverview in Coquitlam. Starting in the mid-1980s and again the mid-1990s and in 2000, following a Canada-wide government trend to deinstitutionalize people with mental illness, the BC government put in place policies to take mentally ill people out of institutions so that they could re-enter the community¹³⁹. However, this was largely done without providing community groups with the promised supports (including supportive housing) and services to care for the mentally ill. That many ended up on the streets highlights the necessary role that support services play in caring for people with mental illness and keeping them from being homeless. Supportive housing (housing with appropriate support services) is seen as a best practice for people with a mental illness and/or other challenges,¹⁴⁰ and is crucial to ending homelessness.

¹³⁸ *Affordable housing in Canada: in search of a new paradigm*, TD Economics, Special Report, June 17, 2003. By Don Drummond, Toronto Dominion Bank Financial Group, <http://www.td.com/economics/special/house03.pdf>

¹³⁹ *BC Mental Health Timeline*, BC Mental Health and Addiction Services, <http://www.bcmhas.ca/AboutUs/History.htm>

¹⁴⁰ *Best Practices in Mental Health and Addictions*, BC Ministry of Health Services, 2002, www.health.gov.bc.ca/mhd/best.html

When support services are not culturally appropriate for the population they are serving, then people in need may not use them. For example, Aboriginal homeless services must be culturally appropriate and controlled by Aboriginal service providers in order to be effective, and support services that target Aboriginal women need to increase.¹⁴¹ A high percentage of BC's homeless population is Aboriginal (e.g. 32% of the Metro Vancouver homeless population and 39% of Kamloops' homeless population is Aboriginal). If support services are not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people or relevant to their particular needs, then a large number of homeless people may not be well served by the existing services.

Support services that are appropriate and adequate for other groups, including youth, women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and other groups with special needs (e.g. people with HIV/AIDS, people with head/brain injuries), also need to be provided.

Support services typically include:¹⁴²

Outreach programs	Abuse prevention and victim support	Good nutrition
Drop-in centres	Community networking and referral systems	Substance abuse services
Legal aid, advocacy, justice	Education and training opportunities	Employment services
Mental health services	Life skills training and counselling	Health / dental care services

Many support services are funded by the provincial government, so the lack of these services is tied to government decisions about how to spend its money. In some cases, the responsibility for homeless services is spread among a number of different government departments, including health, social services, housing, corrections, education and policing. This can result in a lack of coordination of services and uneven levels of service provision for different homeless populations in different regions.¹⁴³

“Associated with the basic need for a safe, secure place to live, homeless individuals and families may also require short-term or ongoing support services....Many of these programs and services play a key role in preventing homelessness. Some are focussed on developing life skills, while others are focused on employment and job training.... In reality, most (if not all) communities have some gaps in their continuum of supports. People continue to fall through the cracks of our social safety net.”

Nelson's Report on Homelessness, 2002¹⁴⁴

“Effective policy approaches to address the pathologies of people who have no place to live are different in only one important way from those who have housing: before any assistance can really work, people without housing must have a stable and adequate place to live - a place to call home. Housing stability is essential for successful treatment and recovery. Adequate housing, combined with supportive services, meaningful daily activity in the community (including work), and access to appropriate therapy, is the necessary framework to address mental health and chemical dependency problems.”

Dr. J. David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies and Professor, Faculty of Social Work University of Toronto¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁴² *Nelson's report on homelessness*, <http://www.ihpr.ubc.ca/media/Nelson2002.pdf>

¹⁴³ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, *Mission to Canada*. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ *Nelson's report on homelessness*, <http://www.ihpr.ubc.ca/media/Nelson2002.pdf>

Random Life Events Matter: The random events that people experience in life can play an immense role in individual outcomes (i.e. how a person's life turns out). Random events are different from choices. **Choices** are what we control. **Random events** (or personal circumstance), whether fortunate or unfortunate, difficult or easy, are beyond a person's control. Some people refer to this as luck or bad luck.

“Whether we are rich or poor may depend in large measure on our inheritance. It may depend on how fortunate we were in owning a plot of well-located or mineral-rich land. Or, it may depend on having the kind of skills that just happen to command a high price in the market”¹⁴⁶

Examples of fortunate random events: Inheriting a lot of money; buying land before the price increases; training in a career in which there are jobs today and that happens to pay well; being born with great health.

Examples of difficult random events: job loss; illness; dissolution of marriage; training in a vocation for which there are no jobs today; mental illness; being born with a disability; violent death of a close family member; sexual abuse (often by a parent or other trusted family member); brain damage through an accidental head injury or “shaken baby syndrome”; being born with autistic spectrum disorder or foetal alcohol syndrome.

Some people experience difficult random events, but will end up ok because they have supports in other areas of their lives.

- A man loses his job and can't afford to pay rent, but because he has a supportive family, he has a place to live while he looks for another job.
- A teenager develops a mental illness. Because his family fully supports him and he is able to receive the appropriate medical care, he is able to complete high school and eventually go to university and get a good job.
- A woman's marriage dissolves and she and her children have to move out of their home, but because she has a good job and enough money, she can easily support herself and her children on her own.

Some people experience great difficulties *and* they have very little money or no support from family, friends or the government to help them out.

They can end up **poor** and **homeless** because of difficult random life events that are beyond their control, *not* because of the choices they made.

¹⁴⁵ *What is homelessness? Question and Answer* by J. David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-home-QandA-index.cfm#5>

¹⁴⁶ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 261.

ABORIGINAL¹⁴⁷ HOMELESSNESS

“Aboriginal housing and homelessness conditions...[reflect] the failures of federal, provincial and territorial governments that have allowed poverty, inadequate housing and homelessness to fester on Aboriginal reserves and off-reserve in urban areas. The United Nations has called attention to the disproportionate numbers of homeless First Nations citizens on the streets of Canadian cities. On the reserves, much of the housing does not even come close to basic standards.”

Jack Layton, 2008¹⁴⁸

A discussion about homelessness in BC and Canada cannot occur without addressing the particular issues of the Aboriginal homeless population.

People of Aboriginal origin are massively over-represented in poverty and homelessness across BC and Canada.¹⁴⁹ According to a 2008 SFU study, an estimated 41% of all Aboriginal peoples in BC are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless.¹⁵⁰ Even if these estimates are high, they are indicative of the dire homeless situation among Aboriginal populations. In Metro Vancouver, people of Aboriginal origin represent 32% of the region’s homeless population, yet only 2% of the region’s census population.¹⁵¹ In Kamloops, Aboriginal people represent 39% of the region’s homeless population, yet only 5% of the region’s census population.¹⁵²

Why are Aboriginal people so over-represented in homelessness?

“An exploration of Aboriginal homelessness must consider the historical and colonial legacy that has destroyed families, communities, and an Aboriginal way of life.... Many advocacy groups argue that the roots of Aboriginal homelessness lie in the multi-generational experiences of residential schools, wardship through the child welfare system, and economic and social marginalization from mainstream Canadian society.”

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ In keeping with the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), we use “the term *Aboriginal people* to refer to the Indigenous inhabitants of Canada when we want to refer in a general manner to Inuit and to First Nations and Métis people, without regard to their separate origins and identities. The term *Aboriginal peoples* refers to organic political and cultural entities that stem historically from the original peoples of North America, rather than collections of individuals united by so-called ‘racial’ characteristics. The term includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (see section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*). *Aboriginal people* (in the singular) means the individuals belonging to the political and cultural entities known as ‘Aboriginal peoples.’” (Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1, 1996, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/rrc-eng.asp>)

¹⁴⁸ *Homelessness: How to end the national crisis* by Jack Layton, Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008, p. 82

¹⁴⁹ *Aboriginal incomes in Canada*, by Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur, Simon Fraser University and University of Ottawa http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/Aboriginal_incomes_with_tabs.pdf

¹⁵⁰ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁵¹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

¹⁵² *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

¹⁵³ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

Decades of living under colonialism have had enduring negative and complex effects on Aboriginal populations across Canada.¹⁵⁴

Colonialism in Canada is the set of dominating and oppressive relationships that, over time and through government policies, subordinated Aboriginal peoples to and marginalized them from the newcomer settler society economically, socially, culturally and politically. In particular, Canadian colonial policies separated Aboriginal peoples from their land, homes, communities and each other. The poverty and homelessness experienced by many Aboriginal people in Canada and BC are just two of the effects of past and recent policies and actions.

Aboriginal people in Canada

“The [United Nations] Special Rapporteur was informed about the significant on-reserve housing problems in every part of the country. In addition, with a majority of Aboriginal people living in urban areas or in areas where their claim to land is not yet recognized, neither the federal government, nor the provinces or territories, accepts responsibility for funding Aboriginal housing initiatives.... The practical effect is that very little new Aboriginal housing off-reserve has been funded in recent years, even though local studies in cities as diverse as Toronto and Edmonton show that a very significant number of people who are homeless are of Aboriginal ancestry.”

Miloon Kithari, United Nations, 2009¹⁵⁵

- In 2006, there were 1,172,790 Aboriginal people in Canada accounting for 3.8% of the nation’s 31 million people.¹⁵⁶ Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in Canada grew by 45%, nearly six times faster than the 8% increase of the non-Aboriginal population.¹⁵⁷
- In 2006, 20.4% of the Aboriginal households living outside reserves in Canada were living in core housing need^{158 159} compared to 12.4% of non-Aboriginal households in Canada.¹⁶⁰
- In 2006, 33.5% of the Aboriginal households living on-reserve in Canada were living below adequacy and suitability standards and unable to access acceptable housing¹⁶¹ compared to 12.4% of non-Aboriginal households in Canada.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Mamow Sha-Way-gi-kay-win: North South Partnership for Children, Executive Summary, Mishkeegogamang and Webequie Assessment Reports, North-South Partnership for Children,

www.northsouthpartnership.com/pdfs/English%20Community%20Assessments%20Executive%20Summary1.pdf

¹⁵⁵ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, p. 20

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ 2006 Census Bulletin: Data on Aboriginal Peoples, Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Relations Program, May 2008,

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/region/aboriginal/Aboriginal%20Affairs%20documents/2006CensusBulletinOnAboriginalPeoples.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Metis and First Nations, 2006 Census Statistics Canada <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ Housing Conditions of Aboriginal Households Living Outside Reserves, Canada, Provinces, Territories and Metropolitan Areas, 2006 Canada Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006

http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_014.cfm

¹⁵⁹ According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), “Core housing need refers to households which are unable to afford shelter that meets adequacy, suitability, and affordability norms. The norms have been adjusted over time to reflect the housing expectations of Canadians. Affordability, one of the elements used to determine core housing need, is recognized as a maximum of 30 per cent of the household income spent on shelter.” http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/faq/faq_002.cfm#4

¹⁶⁰ Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, Canada, 2006 Canadian Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_013.cfm

¹⁶¹ Housing Conditions of Aboriginal Households Living On-reserve, Canada, Provinces, and Territories, 2006 Canadian Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_014.cfm

- On reserves, multiple families are often crowded into single-family units. This contributes to the spread of disease, mental illness, and family violence.^{163 164} In 2006, Aboriginal families were almost four times as likely as non-Aboriginal people to live in a crowded dwelling, and three times as likely to live in a home in need of major repairs.¹⁶⁵
- In some remote reserve communities in Canada, over 50% of children go hungry at times, and up to 20 people live in two or three bedroom homes, most of which have either moderate or severe mould.¹⁶⁶
- 55% of on-reserve housing across Canada is in need of major repairs or replacement. The Indian Act stipulates that reserve properties belong to the Crown, making it impossible for Aboriginal people to obtain financing for construction and reducing their incentive to make major repairs.¹⁶⁷
- The Aboriginal population in Canada has a lower income than non-Aboriginals. The median earnings in 2005 for Aboriginal peoples was \$18,962 - 30% lower than that for the rest of Canadians.¹⁶⁸
- On average, the Aboriginal population does not benefit from education to the same extent as the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, 32% of the Aboriginal population (27% of Aboriginal females and 39% of Aboriginal males) did not have a high school certificate, compared to 15% for non-Aboriginal Canadians¹⁶⁹. A lack of education leads to lowered job prospects and a greater likelihood of poverty.
- In 1972, Ron Basford, the federal minister responsible for housing, declared that access to adequate housing was a right of all Canadians, including Aboriginal people. He committed his government to ensuring the building or acquisition of 50,000 housing units for Aboriginal people residing off reserve in Canada. By 2002, 30 years later, less than 20,000 units had been delivered - 9,000 in rural communities and 11,000 in cities and towns across the country.¹⁷⁰ Basford's declaration that access to adequate housing was a right of all Canadians has not been put into law in Canada.
- In 1993, the federal government, as part of fiscal restraint, halted all new spending for social housing, including any new non-reserve Aboriginal housing.¹⁷¹
- In 1996, the federal government moved to transfer administrative responsibility for existing social housing, including off-reserve Aboriginal housing, to provinces and territories.¹⁷²
- By 2004, no province had accepted responsibility for new non-reserve commitments¹⁷³

¹⁶² *Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, Canada, 2006* Canadian Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_013.cfm

¹⁶³ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁶⁴ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Metis and First Nations, 2006 Census* Statistics Canada <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-renewsement/2006/as-sa/97-558/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ *Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation Assessment Report, January 9-11, 2007*, Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win, North-South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nations Communities, (p. 14-15) <http://www.northsouthpartnership.com/Mishkeegogamang%20Assessment%20Report%20NSP%202007.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ *The Income Gap Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada* by Daniel Wilson and David Macdonald, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, April 2010, <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/reports/docs/Aboriginal%20Income%20Gap.pdf>

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *A New Beginning: The National Non-Reserve Aboriginal Housing Strategy, March 2004*. The National Aboriginal Housing Association/Association Nationale d'Habitation Autochtone (NAHA/ANHA) (p.i) http://www.aboriginalhousing.org/Archive/PDF/The_National_Non-Reserve_Aboriginal_Housing_Strategy.pdf

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Aboriginal people in BC

- BC's total of 196,075 Aboriginal People (representing 4.8% of the provincial population) (2006 census) is second to Ontario's total of 242,495. Overall, BC's Aboriginal population has grown by 15% between 2001 and 2006. This is three times the rate of non-Aboriginal Canadians.¹⁷⁴
- In 2006, 22.3% of the 68,810 Aboriginal households living outside reserves in BC were living in core housing need¹⁷⁵ compared to 14.2% of non-Aboriginal households in BC.¹⁷⁶
- In 2006, 24.2% of the 16,640 Aboriginal households living on-reserve in BC were living below adequacy and suitability standards and unable to access acceptable housing.¹⁷⁷
- It is estimated that 41% of BC's Aboriginal people 15 years and older are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless.¹⁷⁸
- In BC, Aboriginal peoples are over-represented among the homeless population with severe addictions and mental illness (about 30%).¹⁷⁹
- In Metro Vancouver, homelessness within the Aboriginal population grew at a faster rate between 2005 and 2008 (34%) than within the general homeless population (21%).¹⁸⁰
- The number of Aboriginal people in BC as a whole who are at risk of homelessness or absolutely homeless is also growing.¹⁸¹
- In Metro Vancouver, almost three quarters (73%) of the Aboriginal homeless population did not stay in a shelter, safe house, or transition house on the night of the March 2008 count. This suggests that Aboriginal people who are homeless avoid shelters, that shelters do not serve the Aboriginal population well, or that the population is under-reported in the sheltered homeless data provided by the shelters.¹⁸²
- Supported housing options that take into account Aboriginal peoples' unique cultural and health needs do not exist.¹⁸³

Aboriginal women in Canada

- Aboriginal women face some of the most severe housing conditions and challenges in the country, whether they live on reserve or in rural, urban, northern or remote communities. Major issues affecting Aboriginal

¹⁷⁴ 2006 Census Bulletin: Data on Aboriginal Peoples, Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Relations Program, May 2008, <http://www.metrovancouver.org/region/aboriginal/Aboriginal%20Affairs%20documents/2006CensusBulletinOnAboriginalPeoples.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ Housing Conditions of Aboriginal Households Living Outside Reserves, Canada, Provinces, Territories and Metropolitan Areas, 2006 Canada Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_014.cfm

¹⁷⁶ Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, British Columbia, 2006, Canadian Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_013.cfm

¹⁷⁷ Housing Conditions of Aboriginal Households Living On-reserve, Canada, Provinces, and Territories, 2006 Canadian Housing Observer, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2006 http://schl.com/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_014.cfm

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

¹⁸¹ Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁸² Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

¹⁸³ Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

women include family and matrimonial real property laws on reserves, overcrowding, violence and homelessness.¹⁸⁴

- Aboriginal women with disabilities suffer from further barriers to affordable housing, both on and off reserve.¹⁸⁵
- Aboriginal women face a much higher rate of gender violence than non-Aboriginal women. The lack of protective legislation for women living on reserves and off-reserve is a barrier to the enjoyment of the right to housing and to a life free of violence.¹⁸⁶
- On reserve, housing concerns for Aboriginal women include gender discrimination as a consequence of the operation of the Indian Act, including the lack of matrimonial property protection.¹⁸⁷
- The lack of affordable housing can lead to the criminalization of Aboriginal women, who, in their attempts to find and secure affordable housing, are at risk of exploitation by some landlords and gangs. Additionally, without affordable housing, Aboriginal women face the threat of having their children apprehended by the state into the child welfare system.¹⁸⁸

Aboriginal children and youth in Canada

- The population of Aboriginal children and youth is increasing at the fastest rate of any identifiable group in Canada¹⁸⁹ and is younger than the non-Aboriginal population. 48% of the Aboriginal population consists of children and youth under age 24, compared with 31% of the non-Aboriginal population.¹⁹⁰
- Many Aboriginal leaders and scholars have asserted that as a group, Aboriginal children have a diminished quality of life due to the negative impact of colonization on their parents, who were either forced as children to attend residential schools, or are children of residential school survivors¹⁹¹, and are one of the most vulnerable populations of children and youth in Canada.¹⁹²
- There are significant gaps between outcomes of education, health and safety for Aboriginal children and youth, and outcomes for other Canadian children and youth.¹⁹³
- According to the 2006 census, 41 to 52.1% of Aboriginal children live below the poverty line in Canada. One in four First Nations children live in poverty, compared to one in six Canadian children as a whole.¹⁹⁴
- One of the consequences of the colonial disruption of Aboriginal family and community life is that Aboriginal children are greatly overrepresented among children in government care.¹⁹⁵ They represent

¹⁸⁴ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada.* United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Aboriginal Children and Youth in Canada: Canada Must Do Better* Position Paper by the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, June 23, 2010. <http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/Position%20Paper%20-%20Canadian%20Council%20of%20Provincial%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Advocates.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Metis and First Nations, 2006 Census Statistics Canada* <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf>

¹⁹¹ *Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada* by Jessica Ball, IRPP Choices, Vol. 14, no. 7, June 2008 <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no7.pdf>

¹⁹² *Aboriginal Children and Youth in Canada: Canada Must Do Better* Position Paper by the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, June 23, 2010. <http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/Position%20Paper%20-%20Canadian%20Council%20of%20Provincial%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Advocates.pdf>

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada* by Jessica Ball, IRPP Choices, Vol. 14, no. 7, June 2008 <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no7.pdf>

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

approximately 25% of children in government care, and yet only 5% of Canada's child population¹⁹⁶. There are approximately 27,000 Aboriginal children younger than 17 years of age in government care – three times the number enrolled in residential schools at the height of their operations, and more than at any time in Canada's history.¹⁹⁷

Recommendations

- The promises, made by Ron Basford in 1972, to build affordable housing for Aboriginal peoples need to be fulfilled. We need increased funding for affordable housing for Aboriginal people.
- Services for Aboriginal people who are homeless must be culturally appropriate and controlled by Aboriginal service providers in order to be effective.¹⁹⁸
- The representation of Aboriginal staff at existing shelters and outreach programs needs to increase to better engage Aboriginal clients.¹⁹⁹
- Support services that target Aboriginal women need to increase.²⁰⁰
- Investments in programs targeting and tailored to Aboriginal children and youth need to increase.²⁰¹
- We need more culturally appropriate community-based health services to ensure that Aboriginal families do not have to move far from home to find the services they need.²⁰²
- We need improved coordination between federal, provincial and Aboriginal governance systems for health care funding and delivery.²⁰³
- Of note, the province of BC recognizes the disproportionate and significant needs of Aboriginal households, and is working with Aboriginal organizations to address these needs.^{204 205}

Further reading:

A Slap in the Face of Every Canadian by Margaret Philips, Globe and Mail, February 3, 2007.

http://northsouthpartnership.com/advocacy_20070205_0923_6gr5_1.pdf

BC First Nations Studies by Kenneth Campbell, Charles Menzies and Brent Peacock, 2003, BC Ministry of Education

¹⁹⁶ *Aboriginal Children and Youth in Canada: Canada Must Do Better* Position Paper by the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, June 23, 2010. <http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/Position%20Paper%20-%20Canadian%20Council%20of%20Provincial%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Advocates.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ *Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada* by Jessica Ball, IRPP Choices, Vol. 14, no. 7, June 2008 <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no7.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ *Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada* by Jessica Ball, IRPP Choices, Vol. 14, no. 7, June 2008 <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no7.pdf>

²⁰² Canadian Supplement to "The State of the World's Children 2009". *Aboriginal Children's Health: Leaving No Child Behind*. UNICEF, 2009 <http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063>

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²⁰⁵ BC Housing Aboriginal Housing Program, http://www.bchousing.org/programs/Aboriginal_housing

- BC First Nations Studies Teacher's Guide* by Kenneth Campbell, 2004, BC Ministry of Education, (this teacher's guide accompanies the text book, *BC First Nations Studies*). The teacher's guide is available on-line at: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/resdocs/bcfns.htm>
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (April 2010) *The income gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada* by Daniel Wilson and David Macdonald
<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/reports/docs/Aboriginal%20Income%20Gap.pdf>
- Canadian Supplement to "The State of the World's Children 2009". *Aboriginal Children's Health: Leaving No Child Behind*. UNICEF, 2009 <http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063>
- Eastside Life Hits Natives the Hardest*. Cheryl Chan, The Province, October 7, 2009.
<http://www.theprovince.com/Eastside+life+hits+natives+hardest/2074072/story.html#Comments>
- National Aboriginal Housing Association: www.aboriginalhousing.org
- The Homeless Hub: Aboriginal People: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Aboriginal-People-257.aspx> and *Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada* an E-book:
<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=45761&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>
- National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) (2004) *A new beginning: The national non-reserve housing strategy*. http://www.aboriginalhousing.org/Archive/PDF/The_National_Non-Reserve_Aboriginal_Housing_Strategy.pdf
- Position Paper, Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates: *Aboriginal Children and Youth in Canada: Canada Must Do Better*, June 23, 2010.
<http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/Position%20Paper%20-%20Canadian%20Council%20of%20Provincial%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Advocates.pdf>
- Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada* by Jessica Ball, IRPP Choices, Vol. 14, no. 7, June 2008 <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no7.pdf>
- Urban Native Youth Association: www.unya.bc.ca

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Much of the information in this section is from The Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca. Also see page 18 and 19 for statistics on youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver and Kamloops.

“We use many different terms to describe young people who are homeless, including street youth, street kids, runaways, homeless youth, etc....According to recent estimates, there are anywhere from 65,000 to 150,000 homeless youth living in the streets of Canada on any given day....Our definition of homeless youth, in the Canadian context, includes young people up to the age of 24 who are no longer living with parents or guardians, and who lack stable housing, employment and educational opportunities. When we speak of homeless youth, we are really talking about young people who are living in extreme poverty, and whose lives are characterized by the inadequacy of income, health care supports and importantly, the kinds of social supports that we typically deem necessary for the transition from childhood to adulthood – parental and family support, teachers, etc.”

Stephen Gaetz, The Homeless Hub, 2009²⁰⁶

Street youth are distinct from the adult homeless population in at least two major ways:²⁰⁷

1. The causes of homelessness are not typically the same
 - Young people become homeless typically because of family problems/conflicts; physical, sexual and emotional abuse; and previous involvement with the child welfare system
2. Street youth typically lack the experiences and resources to successfully live independently, at least in the short term
 - Most have little to no experience of renting or running a household
 - Few have work experience
 - Homelessness makes continuing school difficult or impossible
 - They have to grow into adulthood without the range of supports usually assumed necessary for this transition

Other challenges street youth face:²⁰⁸

- Difficulty getting affordable housing (landlords are typically reluctant to rent to teenagers)
- Difficulty competing in the job market (particularly if they have not finished school)
- Vulnerable to crimes, including sexual assault
- Feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness
- Discrimination

Despite the challenges street youth experience, there is also strength and resourcefulness on the streets:

- “Many youth work hard to value themselves, build a sense of agency, build hope and learn from having survived extremely adverse conditions”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ *Backgrounder – Who are street youth?* by Stephen Gaetz, Homeless Hub Educational Resources, 2009, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Who-are-Street-Youth-46117.aspx>

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ *Population: Youth* by Asetha Power, The Homeless Hub, 2008, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Youth-268.aspx>

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

The street youth population is diverse:²¹⁰

- There are usually two homeless males for every female
- Certain ethno-racial groups are more likely to become homeless (e.g. Aboriginal, black) (In BC in 2007, 40% of the 762 street-involved youth surveyed in a McCreary Centre Society study²¹¹ were Aboriginal)
- 20-30% of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (suggesting that homophobia is a leading cause of homelessness)
- Some are legal refugees
- Some have mental health issues and addictions
- Many have a history in foster or group homes
- They come from all kinds of communities and a broad range of class backgrounds

Recommendations:

- Provide more resources to agencies and schools so abuse and neglect can be identified early and mental health treatment can be provided to youth who need it²¹²
- Develop training and education programs to improve street youths' sense of self worth and employment opportunities²¹³
- Develop affordable housing for vulnerable youth²¹⁴
- Provide better access to health care and mental health treatment²¹⁵
- Develop initiatives to combat the social stigma that street youth face²¹⁶
- Provide adequate services to address the needs of youth and their families²¹⁷
- Prioritize assistance, support and education for families of young adolescents²¹⁸ and street-involved youth
- Provide access to substance use treatment²¹⁹
- Provide additional supports to help youth reach their educational goals²²⁰
- Address the unacceptably high levels of sexual exploitation, violence, abuse and discrimination experienced by youth²²¹
- Provide Aboriginal organizations with the capacity to offer culturally appropriate safe housing and other supportive services, in order to address the rising numbers of Aboriginal youth who are marginalized and street-involved²²²

²¹⁰ *Backgrounder – Who are street youth?* by Stephen Gaetz, Homeless Hub Educational Resources, York University, 2009, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Who-are-Street-Youth-46117.aspx>

²¹¹ *Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC*, The McCreary Centre Society, 2007, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf

²¹² *Population: Youth* by Asetha Power, The Homeless Hub, 2008, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Youth-268.aspx>

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ *Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC*, The McCreary Centre Society, 2007, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

Further reading:

Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC (2007) The McCreary Centre Society, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf

BC's child poverty rate still Canada's highest CBC News, November 24, 2009
<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/11/24/bc-child-poverty-report.html>

BC Campaign 2009: 2009 Child Poverty Report Card
<http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/provincial/BritishColumbia/2009ReportCard.pdf>

Girl Homelessness in Canada, Justice for Girls (2007), Prepared for Parity Magazine Australia,
<http://www.justiceforgirls.org/publications/pdfs/ParityArticle.pdf>

Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada Edited by: D. Hulchanski, P. Campsie, S.B.Y. Chau, S.H. Hwang, & E. Paradis (2009), Cities Centre Press, University of Toronto. An E-book:
<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=45761&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions by Raising the Roof
http://www.raisingtheroof.org/RoadtoSolutions_fullrept_english.pdf or www.raisingtheroof.org

The following articles and many others on youth are available at the Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca

- Who are Street Youth?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=46117&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1
- Why do Young People Become Homeless?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Why-do-Young-People-Become-Homeless-46121.aspx
- Why Street Youth Panhandle
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Why-Street-Youth-Panhandle-46124.aspx
- Do Homeless Youth Get Enough to Eat?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Do-Homeless-Youth-Get-Enough-to-Eat-46127.aspx
- Attitudes about Homelessness – How We Think about Homeless Youth Matters
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Attitudes-about-Homelessness-46122.aspx
- Youth homelessness
www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Youth-268.aspx
- Whose Safety Counts Street Youth, Social Exclusion and Criminal Victimization by Stephen Gaetz
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/32-Whose-Safety-Counts-Street-Youth-Social-Exclusion-and-Criminal-Victimization-45795.aspx?search=Gaetz%2c+Stephen&orgSearchString=Gaetz%2c+Stephen

Websites:

Youthworks: Partners Solving Youth Homelessness <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-youth-index.cfm>

Urban Native Youth Association www.unya.bc.ca

Look up the youth resource centre in your community or area.

On-line videos:

Youth share personal stories of homelessness by Raising the Roof. Go to www.raisingtheroof.org

The website for Homeless Nation www.homelessnation.org includes videos by and about homeless youth

Broadway Youth Resource Centre in Vancouver has a 3-minute video on its website home page:

<http://broadwayyouthresourcecentre.org/>

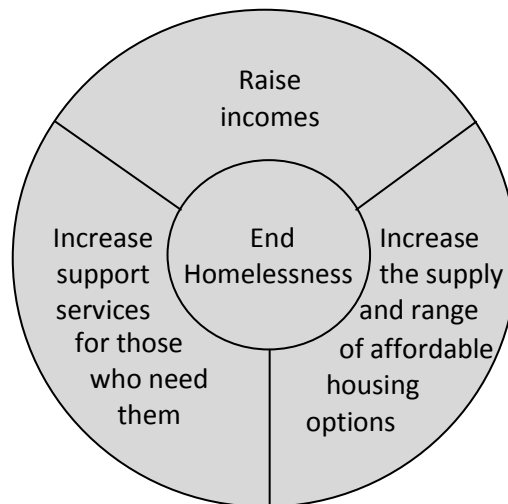
WHAT CAN BE DONE TO END HOMELESSNESS?

Create and implement policies to end homelessness

Governments, whether city, provincial or federal, create and implement **policies** in the form of laws, regulations, decisions and actions in order to solve public issues, such as homelessness.

The homelessness we see on the streets today is directly linked to government decisions that have left our society's most vulnerable people without access to income, affordable housing and necessary support services. Therefore, government policies intending to end homelessness need to target **all three of these areas**.

Figure 3 – Ways to end homelessness



1. PROVIDE A BASIC AND ADEQUATE INCOME TO POOR PEOPLE

Among other things, homelessness is affected by the extent to which governments intervene and redistribute income to poor people. There are many policy options available that would increase the incomes of poor people.

- The provincial government could increase the support and shelter components of income assistance
- The provincial government could reduce the barriers to, simplify the rules of and expand eligibility criteria of income assistance
- The provincial government could raise the minimum wage and eliminate the training wage
- The federal government expand the eligibility criteria and decrease the wait time of employment insurance
- The provincial and federal governments could increase employment assistance and training programs, and target them to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness

2. INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND RANGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing is a key to preventing and ending homelessness. A policy response to the lack of affordable housing would be the creation of a greater supply and range of affordable housing units built by governments and private developers.

- The provincial government could provide increased funding for subsidized units, including social housing units for people who can live independently, supportive housing and transitional housing units

- The federal government could re-enter the market for subsidized housing.
- Municipal governments could create legislation or regulation to encourage private developers to build more privately-built, publicly-subsidized rental housing
- The federal and municipal governments could create legislation or regulation to encourage or subsidize private developers to enter the rental housing market and to preserve the existing stock of rental housing
- Provincial and municipal governments could ensure that the shelter system has sufficient number of beds to meet emergency needs (while simultaneously providing enough affordable and supportive housing to minimize the need for emergency shelters)

3. INCREASE THE SUPPLY, RANGE AND COORDINATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

- The provincial government could increase the supply and range of publicly-funded services that support people who are homeless and help keep them housed once in housing
- The provincial government could increase the supply and range of support services that meet the needs of specific groups, e.g. people of Aboriginal origin; youth; people with mental illness, addictions, HIV/AIDS, and/or head/brain injuries; and people with concurrent disorders/multiple challenges
- The provincial government could improve the coordination between the variety of government departments that provide support services (health, social services, housing, corrections, education and policing) and balance the provision of services among different populations

WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM TO PAY FOR THESE THINGS?

Choosing to spend money to address homelessness:

Governments must continually make choices on how much revenue should be collected and on how to spend it. Should government raise tax revenue, or leave that money in the hands of households? Should money be spent on fighter jets, hospitals, education, social workers, garbage disposal, policing, increased welfare payments, or social housing?

Many people believe that it is the responsibility of governments to choose to spend money to improve the lives of people on the margins of society, including homeless people and those at risk of being homeless.

Increasing income taxes or stopping their decline:

One of the main ways governments raise revenue (money) is through taxes. If we want to spend money to improve the lives of homeless people, we have to raise that money through taxation.

Income tax rates in BC have been declining for 15 years. In 1995, the tax rate on income over \$125,000 was about 55%. Today it is around 45%. This means that a person with a \$200,000/year income pays in 2010 about \$7500 less in taxes than s/he did in 1995, representing a lot less money that the government has to spend.

Increasing tax rates, or stopping their decline, would raise revenue which can be used to transfer resources to poor households and individuals, to build housing, and to provide support services.

What will it take for these things to happen?

Ending homelessness is not complicated, though it is expensive. We know how to do it and have done it before. We had much less homelessness along with more social programs and publicly-funded housing options in the past. It takes commitment on the part of citizens and governments to make things happen.

ACTIVITIES

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*Activities 3A and 10 are based on two films about homelessness. (Film descriptions are on page 149 and 151.)

Film for Activity 3A: *“Something to Eat, a Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn”*
by Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve

Film for Activity 10: *“The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink”* by Sterling Pache and Danse Crowkiller

The filmmakers have generously given permission for their films to be reproduced for educational purposes. Thanks to funding from Metropolis British Columbia, the films will be provided to educators at no cost.

To request a film for educational purposes, please email Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film(s).

Teachers can also purchase the film, *“The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink”*, directly from Danse Crowkiller, who can generally be found outside the East End Food Co-op at 1034 Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Thanks to funding from Metropolis British Columbia, Danse has been provided with films to sell to supplement his income. Thanks to funding from an anonymous donor, Danse has also been paid an honorarium for giving permission for the film to be reproduced, used in this guide and distributed to educators.

ACTIVITY 1: “THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME”

Students will:

- Reflect on the meaning of “home”
- Develop an understanding of the term “homelessness”

Materials:

- Paper, pencil crayons, felt pens
- Copies of **Activity 1: BLM 1** (optional)

This activity asks students to consider what “home” means to them. For a variety of reasons, some students may not want to reflect on or talk about their home life. You may wish to skip this activity or revise it, depending on your students’ needs and situations.

Activity:

1. Ask students what “home” means to them. Students individually draw a picture or sketch a collage of images to respond to the question “What does home mean to you?” If you wish, you can give each student a copy of Activity 1: BLM 1, or just have students fold a blank piece of paper in half. On the top half they draw/sketch what home means to them. The bottom half will be used in #3 below.
2. Invite students to share their drawing or collage with a partner, taking turns to explain their work to each other. Tell students that they do not have to share if they don’t want to. Students can add to their drawings based on their discussions.
3. Ask students (either individually or with a partner) to consider how their lives would be different if they didn’t have a home – what would or wouldn’t they be able to do? Which activities that they have planned this week would they not be able to do if they had nowhere to live? How would they feel? (See Activity 1: BLM 1 or students use the bottom half of their folded paper). Follow up with a full-class discussion.

(Student responses may include comments such as the following: *I wouldn’t know where to sleep. Where would I get my food? I would probably be cold. I would get dirty and how would I get clean? I’d probably be grumpy. But I wouldn’t have to clean up or do chores. And I wouldn’t have to go to school. But if I kept going to school, I probably wouldn’t get my homework done and I’d get in trouble. Pat wouldn’t be able to come over because there’d be nowhere for him to come. I’d probably miss my dentist appointment. I might be too tired and hungry to play soccer. I might hurt myself or get hurt. I’d probably be afraid, lonely and sad*)

4. Now ask students what they know about homelessness. Write their responses on the board or overhead. Have them consider the following:

Before defining homelessness, it helps to think about what it means to have a home. “Most Canadians recognize that having a home is essential to everything we value in life. Without a home, it is extremely difficult to meet basic physical needs or maintain family, friends, community involvement and work.”²²³

Homelessness, therefore, can be described as the lack of these things that encompass what it means to have a home, including, but not limited to, the fact that you lack security and safety, that you have no place to call your own, that you are always the intruder into other people’s spaces, that you have no place for your things, that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to maintain your physical and emotional health, and that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to maintain relationships, work, treatment regimes or even regular food preparation.

5. Optional: provide students with copies of pages 8 and 9 from the Teacher Background.

²²³ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 3, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

Activity 1: BLM 1

Draw a picture or sketch a collage of images to illustrate what 'home' means to you

How would your life be different if you didn't have a home? What would or wouldn't you be able to do? Think of all the things you have planned to do this week. Which activities could you not do if you had nowhere to live? How would you feel? (Use the back of the page if necessary)

ACTIVITY 2: MYTH BUSTER - RANKING ACTIVITY

Students will:

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

Materials:

- For each pair of students: chart paper, glue, marker pen, set of statements (**Activity 2: BLM 1**) cut out ahead of time and put in an envelope or paper-clipped together

Pre-Ranking Activity:

It is suggested that you do Activity 1: “There’s No Place Like Home” prior to doing the ranking activity. If you don’t have time to dedicate a full lesson to doing Activity 1, you can do the following:

1. Begin by asking students what “home” means to them. Students individually draw a picture or sketch a collage of images to respond to the question “What does home mean to you?”
2. Invite students to share their collage or drawing with a partner, taking turns to explain their work to each other. Tell students that they do not have to share if they don’t want to.
3. Now ask students to imagine not having these things, and ask what they know about homelessness. Write their responses on the board or overhead.

Ranking Activity:

1. Give each pair of students a set of statements, pre-cut (Activity 2: BLM 1), a piece of chart paper and a marker pen. Students work in pairs to rank the set of value statements on homelessness on a line or continuum according to the extent to which they agree with the statements.
2. At one end of a large piece of chart paper, students write “Agree with the Most”. At the other end, they write “Agree with the Least”. Pairs must reach a consensus about the order in which they rank the statements and lay the statements between the two extremes on their chart paper. Statements do not have to be placed on a vertical line or be spaced equally.
3. Before gluing the statements to the paper, each pair partners with another pair of students to compare rankings. Pairs can change their ranking based on their small-group discussion.
4. This is followed by a full class discussion after which pairs again have an opportunity to re-rank their statements. Once they are satisfied with their ranking, pairs can glue their statements to the chart paper.

CAUTION: Some of the statements portray a negative image of homeless people. These are common stereotypes and reflect prejudices that some members of the public have about homeless people, but are for the most part false. Make sure you factor in time to debrief all the statements (See **Activity 1: BLM 2** for suggestions), deconstruct the negative images, provide or ask students for alternative views and discuss the meaning of words such as stereotype, prejudice and discrimination (see glossary on p. 51).

Discussion: *Some questions to prompt discussion*

- What surprised you? Why?
- What did you learn?
- How did you feel doing this activity? What was easy? What was difficult? Why?
- Did your thoughts and opinions about homelessness change from doing this activity? How?
- Did you change your ranking after the discussions? Why?
- If you were to draw a line between all the statements with which you agree and all those with which you disagree, where would it go? What’s similar about the ones with which you agree? What’s similar about the ones with which you disagree?
- What questions are you left with about homelessness?

Debrief the statements: (See **Activity 2: BLM 2** for suggestions for debriefing the statements)

The statements reflect values, attitudes and beliefs that people hold. The collection of values, attitudes and beliefs of a person or organization is sometimes referred to as a worldview. Why are worldviews important? Because they influence not only how we see the world but how we act in the world (our behaviours and actions). They affect the way we relate to each other, the attitudes we have about people who are wealthier or poorer than we are, the way we regard the role of governments, the way we treat other people, the way we regard and treat the environment.

- What worldview (values, attitudes and beliefs) does each statement portray?
- Which are positive and which are negative?
- What kind of solutions to homelessness might we support if we had a negative view of homeless people?
- What kind of solutions to homelessness might we support if we had a positive view of homeless people?

Follow-up ideas:

1. Students write a reflection piece on their perspectives about homelessness, and give justification for the order in which they ranked their statements. They can also explain and give reasons for changes in opinions they had during the lesson. Students could explain what the following statement by Gandhi means to them: *"The best test of a civilized society is the way in which it treats its most vulnerable and weakest members."*

2. Watch and discuss: **Misconceptions of the Downtown Eastside** – (Vancouver) (2008) (3 min 38 sec) (Sam Herman, Mark Harrison, Assis Brioschi-Serrano) This powerful "digital story" was produced by three high school students at Prince of Wales Secondary School, Vancouver after Dr. Gabor Mate visited their school and spoke about Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and misunderstandings and stereotyping. The film was produced as part of the Yayem Digital Storytelling program (www.yayem.com) supported by Atira Women's Resource Society (<http://atira.bc.ca>). View film at: <http://www.yayem.com/video/751/mas-videoflv>

3. Some other value statements you might want to discuss with your students:

- Helping the poor only makes their situation worse
- Anyone could live on welfare. It's 'free' money
- Housing is a human right – everyone deserves a safe, warm place to live. It's the role of governments to provide it for people who, for whatever reason, cannot afford it themselves.
- People who live on the street have the same needs and wants as people who are housed – including love, friendships, companionship and joy.
- Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met even if they can't afford to meet them themselves. Society, through governments, should provide the resources for this to happen.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- All people in Canada should have a right to adequate housing, just like they have a right to an education and to health care.
- Homeless people are part of our community.
- There is nothing I can do to end homelessness.
- It would be very hard to be homeless. Homeless people must suffer a lot.
- I plan to study, work hard, and pay my own way. Why should I help people who don't do this?
- Everything is a personal choice.
- Government assistance is sufficient and encourages independence.
- Attitudes about homeless youth can be found at: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Attitudes-about-Homelessness-46122.aspx>

Adapted and used with permission of World Vision Canada from "What Do You Think? Nine Views on Poverty" and "Poverty Exercise" by World Vision Canada, Education and Public Engagement: <http://www.worldvision.ca/Education-and-Justice/Teacher-Resources/Pages/What-Do-You-Think-Nine-Views-On-Poverty.aspx> and <http://www.worldvision.ca/Education-and-Justice/Teacher-Resources/Pages/poverty-exercise.aspx>

GLOSSARY OF RELEVANT TERMS

Compassion - to suffer with another (Other definitions which may also be used are: sympathetic, sad concern for someone experiencing misfortune; commiseration, condolence)²²⁴

Discrimination - when someone's behaviour towards another person is based on stereotypes or prejudices, the result is discrimination. In other words, discrimination involves putting prejudice into action.²²⁵
Discrimination....means practices or attitudes that have...the effect of limiting an individual's or group's right to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics.²²⁶

Empathy - the action of seeing into another's mind and heart, thereby, as much as possible, reaching a full and sympathetic understanding of his/her thoughts, feelings, or experiences²²⁷

Myth - an unfounded or false notion; a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone; one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society²²⁸

Paradigm shift - When inconsistencies arise and present unsolvable problems, our views change and we must form a new opinion²²⁹

Prejudice - usually a negative opinion of a person or group of people formed without sufficient knowledge²³⁰; a preconceived opinion based on a stereotype or inadequate information²³¹

Stereotype - an overly generalized image of a particular person or group. It may be positive or negative. Stereotyping assumes uniformity within the group.²³²

²²⁴ From *On Any Given Day: Homelessness Education Planning Resource Guide, Grades 9-12*, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Board of Education, 2003, available: http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/pdf/curriculum/grade_9.pdf

²²⁵ From *Law in Action: Understanding Canadian Law*, by Annice Blair, William Costiniuk, Larry O'Malley and Alan Wasserman, Pearson Prentice Hall, Toronto, 2003, p. 112

²²⁶ From *Report of the Commission on Equality in Employment* by Judge Rosalie Abella, 1984, as quoted in *Pivot Legal Society v. Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association and another*, 2009 BCHRT 229, July 3, 2009, p. 21, available: <http://www.pivotlegal.org/pdfs/09-07-07-PivotvsDVBIA.PDF>

²²⁷ From *On Any Given Day: Homelessness Education Planning Resource Guide, Grades 9-12*, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Board of Education, 2003, available: http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/pdf/curriculum/grade_9.pdf

²²⁸ From *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, available: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth>

²²⁹ From *On Any Given Day: Homelessness Education Planning Resource Guide, Grades 9-12*, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Board of Education, 2003, available: http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/pdf/curriculum/grade_9.pdf

²³⁰ From *On Any Given Day: Homelessness Education Planning Resource Guide, Grades 9-12*, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Board of Education, 2003, available: http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/pdf/curriculum/grade_9.pdf

²³¹ From *Law in Action: Understanding Canadian Law*, by Annice Blair, William Costiniuk, Larry O'Malley and Alan Wasserman, Pearson Prentice Hall, Toronto, 2003, p. 112

²³² From *Home Free: Exploring Issues of Homelessness* by Anita Dhawan and Rachelle Marsan, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, (p.10), available: <http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/Documents/Home%20Free%20-%20Exploring%20Issues%20of%20Homelessness.pdf>

The statements need to be cut up so each one is on an individual strip. Each pair of student receives one set of strips of all the statements. Teachers can modify statements as they see fit.

Homelessness is not a problem or concern in our city. I don't know what all the fuss is about.

The best way to end homelessness is to change ourselves. As individuals and as a society, we need to be more generous and caring. If we as a society really cared, we could end homelessness.

There have always been homeless people and there always will be. There's nothing I or anyone can do to end it.

Homeless people are on the street because they want to be there or because they are lazy and don't want to work. It's their own fault.

Homeless people are resourceful and knowledgeable. They have ideas about how to solve their own problems. They need to be respected, consulted and listened to.

People from all walks of life can end up homeless.

The government is not responsible for homeless people and should not provide welfare and other services. That's not how we should use taxpayers' money.

Ending homelessness is not a question of whether or not we can afford it. It's a question of the choices we as a society make and of how governments decide to spend taxpayers' money.

It's inexcusable and wrong that homelessness exists in our cities and towns.

It should be illegal for people to sleep on the street or in parks.

Homelessness is not a problem or concern in our city. I don't know what all the fuss is about.

This statement ignores or 'turns a blind eye' to the problem. Homelessness has in fact risen rapidly and dramatically over the past decade in cities and towns across British Columbia. For example, according to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, between 2002 and 2008 in the Metro Vancouver region, the number of people living on the street has more than doubled²³³ (see the Teacher Backgrounder section, page 14). People who live on the street experience the most severe forms of deprivation. Homelessness is a huge problem in most cities and towns in BC and Canada.

According to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count:

*There has been a significant growth in the number of homeless people in Metro Vancouver since the last count in 2005. While the number of homeless people in the region as a whole grew by 22% (2,174 to 2,660) from the 2005 count, some suburban municipalities saw 100% or more growth. The largest percentage growth occurred in the Tri-Cities (140%), followed by Burnaby (110%) and Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows (102%).*²³⁴

In 2007, Miloon Kothari, United Nations special rapporteur on adequate housing, visited Canada on a mission to examine homelessness and the right to adequate housing in Canada²³⁵. He noted the crisis of homelessness across Canada.

The best way to end homelessness is to change ourselves. As individuals and as a society, we need to be more generous and caring. If we as a society really cared, we could end homelessness.

Many people believe that as a society we have become less caring about and less compassionate for the most marginalized and vulnerable members of our communities. So changing homelessness is really about changing ourselves and our attitudes towards the poor to create a society in which people are willing to look after each other and in which everyone will be supported if something bad happens in their life.

There have always been homeless people and there always will be. There's nothing I or anyone can do to end it.

This is a fatalistic perspective, meaning we are powerless to do anything about homelessness. While there may always be a few people who live on the streets, it is possible to end homelessness in general. Homelessness was nowhere near as extensive twenty years ago as it is today. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was barely any visible homelessness in towns and cities across Canada. If we were able to prevent homelessness in the past, we are able to end it and prevent it today. We have policy tools to end homelessness.

Homeless people are on the street because they want to be there or because they are lazy and don't want to work. It's their own fault.

This negative stereotype can perpetuate myths (falsehoods) about homeless people. Very few people live on the streets because they want to be there. This statement puts the blame for homelessness solely on homeless people themselves, rather than on society and government decisions. People who make this kind of statement don't want to take any responsibility for homelessness. This statement also perpetuates the attitude and belief

²³³ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²³⁴ *Executive Summary: Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Sept, 2008:

http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_Executive_Summary_FINAL_Sept_15.pdf

²³⁵ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

that homeless people are undeserving of support, care, help, compassion, and other basic needs (good shelter, nutritious food, etc).

Homeless people are resourceful and knowledgeable. They have ideas about how to solve their own problems. They need to be respected, consulted and listened to.

This view of homeless people shows them in a positive light, as people with knowledge, wisdom and abilities who need to be consulted and included as partners in any efforts or activities that will affect their lives.

People from all walks of life can end up homeless.

Even people who have jobs and homes and are educated can be vulnerable to homelessness, depending on the circumstance. If someone loses his job and has no other forms of support and can't afford to pay rent, he could end up homeless. People who live in places where rents are high and there is little affordable housing available are particularly vulnerable to homelessness if they are poor (low income) and if something unfortunate happens in their lives to change their circumstance for the worse (fall ill, lose job, victim of physical or sexual abuse, brain injury) and they have no forms of support. "Unfortunate things happen to people everywhere, but they result in homelessness mainly when the person faces high rent and has low income" (Krishna Pendakur, Professor of Economics, Simon Fraser University, 2010).

The government is not responsible for homeless people and should not provide welfare and other services. That's not how we should use taxpayers' money.

According to this perspective, governments should not interfere with the market, and taxpayers should not have the responsibility of providing for homeless people. However, while markets might generate efficiency or good use of resources, they do not generate equity. To get equity and fairness, we need intervention by government. That's why in Canada the government uses money raised through taxation to redistribute income in favour of the less fortunate.²³⁶

Ending homelessness is not a question of whether or not we can afford it. It's a question of the choices we as a society make and of how governments decide to spend taxpayers' money.

As citizens of a democracy, Canadians elect their governments to represent them and make decisions and policies on their behalf. Voters can choose to elect governments that reflect their values. The values inherent in this perspective are a belief in the common good and a belief that we are all responsible for making our society one in which everyone can live healthy, safe lives – and a belief that this can be achieved by choosing to spend money government raises from taxes on policies and programs that benefit poor and low-income people. Activities 11 and 12 go into more detail on this topic.

It's inexcusable and wrong that homelessness exists in our cities and towns.

According to this perspective, it is morally wrong that there is homelessness and people living in such poverty when others live in luxury. It is similar to the perspective or value statement above.

It should be illegal for people to sleep on the street or in parks.

People who hold this perspective believe that homeless people should not be allowed to sleep in public places. However, when there are not enough housing options for homeless people, they have little choice to do anything else. Activity 9 explores this issue in more depth.

²³⁶ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 31.

ACTIVITY 3A: HOMELESSNESS TRUE/FALSE AND *SOMETHING TO EAT, A PLACE TO SLEEP AND SOMEONE WHO GIVES A DAMN*, A FILM ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

If you are unable to obtain a copy of the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, or if you do not think the film is suitable for your students, have students do the Homelessness True/False in Activity 3B on page 64.

Students will:

- Gain a general understanding of homelessness
- Learn specific facts about homelessness in BC, including the fact that Aboriginal people are over-represented among the homeless population
- Students may dispel some of the misunderstandings they have around homelessness and the population of homeless

Materials:

- Order in advance: DVD of the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn* by Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve). Teachers can order the film at no cost by emailing Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film.
- DVD player, projector and screen
- Class Copies of the True and False Sheet (**Activity 3A: BLM 1**)

Film Description:

Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn - (Vancouver) (2008) (35 min) (Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve) This persuasive and honest documentary explores the homeless epidemic in metro Vancouver by putting a face to homelessness and giving a voice to the homeless and those who work with them. It is a film filled with hope. Find out how you can make a difference.

Preview the film before showing it to your students. It contains occasional adult subject matter and coarse language. You can do Activity 3B if you do not think the film is suitable for your students.

Activity:

1. Hand out **Activity 3A: BLM 1** to each student and explain that they are to read each statement and in the “Me” column, write if they think the statement is true or false.
2. Show the film. Immediately after watching it, students record in the “Film” column whether each statement is true or false according to what was said in the film.
3. Go through the answer key (**Activity 3A: BLM 2**) with students and discuss the facts to the answers.

Discussion:

Suggested discussion questions to follow the film:

- What are some of the challenges homeless people face?
- What are some of the frustrations and disappointments?
- What are some things that bring joy?
- What did Reverend Ric Matthews mean when he said “What happens elsewhere affects us in our most safe places”?
- When Judy Graves says “Most people say to you that they choose to be homeless,” what does she say they really mean?

- What did Edward Green mean when he said ““People say I’m homeless, but I’m not homeless....I’m at home where I am”?”
- What did Patrick Stewart mean when he said “It’s a challenge to try to get people to look beyond the numbers”?
- What did Gloria mean when she said, “Not having a home is like not having security”?
- What did Reverend Ric Matthews mean when he said: “The price of the ingredients for a cup of soup: 50 cents. Buying the mug in which we put the soup: \$1.50. The cost of preparing it and boiling it and serving it: \$5.00. Your presence at the table drinking a cup of soup alongside somebody else: priceless”? He goes on to say: “That’s the gift. My challenge to anyone who says I think I really care or I’d like to care is spend time being here. Not bringing something special. Daring to become vulnerable down here and to know that if you are that you will be forever changed because when you encounter somebody in need what you encounter is somebody with tremendous gifts who will make you far more human than you ever thought was possible. And it will transform you. And in the process it becomes a gift to the others.”
- According to people in the film, what are some of the things that can be done to help end homelessness? Which one(s) would you like to do? Refer to pages 5 and 6 in Activity 3A: BLM 2.
- What else did you learn from the film? What moved you? What surprised you? How did you feel watching it?
- Why do you think the film’s title is *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*?
- How has the film influenced your ideas around homelessness?
- What was confirmed that you already knew?
- What questions did the film leave you with?

Extensions:

1. Watch and discuss videos on the Homeless Nation website: www.homelessnation.org or another film from the film list on pages 147-155.
2. Students listen to a song or read a poem about homelessness and write about and/or discuss its meaning.

Songs: *Mr. Wendal* by Arrested Development (a song about a homeless man)

<http://www.arresteddevelopmentmusic.com>

Song <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyqp2f6VPos&feature=related>

Lyrics <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/arrested-development/mr-wendal.html>

Another Day in Paradise by Phil Collins

Song http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2327g_phil-collins-another-day-in-paradis_music

Lyrics http://www.lyricsfreak.com/p/phil+collins/another+day+in+paradise_20108035.html

Poetry: *Hundred Block Rock* by Bud Osborne (1999) (A book of poems about Vancouver’s downtown eastside), Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC, www.arsenalpulp.com, ISBN: 1-55152-074-5

3. Do the extra True/False statements from Activity 3B (below). See **Activity 3B: BLM 2** for answers.
 - All people who are homeless live on the streets or in basic emergency shelters
 - In BC, more men than women live on the street or in emergency shelters
 - Most homeless people are men in their late twenties to early thirties
 - In some places, such as Metro Vancouver, homelessness among women is rising faster than homelessness among men
 - Counting the number of homeless is an easy task
 - Homelessness occurs only in big cities like Vancouver and not in smaller towns
 - Expensive rents for housing is one of the causes of homelessness

Activity 3A: BLM 1

Name _____

Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn: A film about homelessness
True/False Activity

Before watching the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, read the statements below and record in the “Me” column whether you think each one is true or false. After watching the film, record in the “Film” column what was said in the film.

Statements	True or False?	
	Me	Film
1. There is no federal housing program in Canada.		
2. Many people who are homeless have a mental illness and/or a drug addiction.		
3. A lack of affordable housing is one of the causes of homelessness.		
4. Many people who are homeless have jobs.		
5. Many homeless people would rather live outside than in the housing that’s available to them.		
6. Properly run social housing will make things much safer.		
7. 2500-3000 people are homeless in Metro Vancouver.		
8. Homelessness in Metro Vancouver has increased by over 100% since 2002.		
9. Aboriginal people are over-represented in homelessness.		
10. Housing is not considered a human right by the Government of Canada.		
11. Homeless people never find joy in their lives.		
12. Sometimes homeless people get beaten up by wealthier, middle-class people.		
13. There is a solution to homelessness.		
14. There are things I can do to help end homelessness.		

Teacher Answer Key to True or False Exercise

1. There is no federal housing program in Canada. TRUE

In 1993, the federal government ended Canada's national housing program. This program used to provide funds to each province to build affordable housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government built a lot of housing, financed a lot of housing and supported socially-mixed housing developments, cooperative housing and other forms of low-cost housing across Canada. During those years, there was very little homelessness across Canada. With the decentralization of federal responsibilities starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, the federal government stopped providing housing and let provincial governments take control. We have seen a great increase in homelessness since then. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 29)

“Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a national housing strategy”
Miloon Kithari, United Nations²³⁷

Libby Davies, MP for Vancouver East, has called on the federal government to support a national housing strategy²³⁸. [Bill C-304](#)²³⁹ is currently before the House of Commons. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 29)

2. Many people who are homeless have a mental illness and/or a drug addiction. TRUE

The homeless have a very high incidence of mental illness. Approximately 33% of homeless people suffer from mental illness; however estimates vary a lot, ranging from 25% to 50%. In some subgroups, the percentage can be higher. For instance, in Toronto in the late 1990s, the prevalence of mental illness among homeless women was 75%.²⁴⁰

The homeless also have a very high incidence of drug addiction. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, approximately 60% of homeless people reported having an addiction. More research about addictions on the street is needed to answer questions such as “are more people becoming homeless because of addictions or do homeless people become addicted once they are homeless?”²⁴¹ The same is the case for mental illness.

Substantial overlap between drug addiction and mental illness is common, with many people being diagnosed with both severe addiction and mental illness (SAMI).

See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 17, 22, 28, 31, 32)

It is important to note that every condition and illness (including mental illness and drug addiction) found among the homeless is also found among people who are housed. Why aren't they homeless? Most likely they are not homeless because they have support from family, friends and the community and/or enough wealth to keep them housed. While they are associated with homelessness, and can contribute to and be aggravated by homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness do not cause homelessness on their own. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 31, 32, 33)

²³⁷ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

²³⁸ See <http://www.libbydavies.ca/parliament/questionperiod/2010/05/27/libby-calls-government-support-national-housing-strategy>.

²³⁹ Bill C-304, http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Bills/403/Private/C-304/C-304_2/C-304_2.PDF

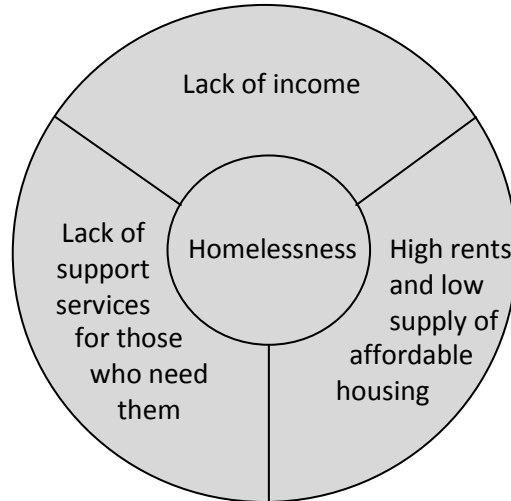
²⁴⁰ Taking responsibility for homelessness: An action plan for Toronto, Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force by A. Golden, W. Currie, E. Greaves and J. Latimer, 1999, Toronto.

²⁴¹ Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

3. A lack of affordable housing is one of the causes of homelessness. TRUE

The main drivers of homelessness are high rents and a low supply of affordable housing, lack of income and a lack of support services. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 25-33). Activity 4 goes into more detail on these causes of homelessness. Activities 6 and 7 focus on the “Affordable Housing” piece within the following diagram.

A combination of factors contributes to homelessness



4. Many people who are homeless have jobs. TRUE

The working poor: Contrary to popular belief, many homeless people work for an income. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 19% of the total homeless population (one in five people) and 27% of the sheltered population reported having full-time, part-time or casual employment. Even with an income, they still could not afford to rent a place in the region.²⁴² In Kamloops in 2005, 15% of homeless people had full, part-time or casual employment.²⁴³ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 19 and 28)

In the film, Judy Graves says: “When I began to work with homeless people in the mid-1990s, we found mostly people with severe mental illness and addictions in the street. Now I’m beginning to find people who work in some of the better restaurants in Vancouver living behind dumpsters because they cannot afford to live inside. I’m finding people who hold heavy construction jobs and are building condos that will be occupied by wealthy people living in the streets curled up in doorways at night with their hard hat and their boots under their head as a pillow.”

5. Many people who are homeless would rather live outside than in the housing that’s available to them. TRUE

Emergency shelters are one of the housing options available to people who are homeless and have very little money (not even enough money to rent a room in a single-room occupancy hotel). However, many people prefer not to stay in a shelter and would rather sleep outside.

While emergency shelters provide a necessary service, sometimes they can be unclean and noisy, with strict rules, including restrictions on the length of time a person can stay. Theft can also be common in shelters. Sometimes shelters are full – there are rarely enough shelter beds for the population of people who live on the street. Some shelters turn people away if they are too young for an adult shelter, too old for a youth shelter, if there are no beds available for their gender, or if they are intoxicated or “high”. While low-barrier shelters do

²⁴² *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁴³ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

exist, they are insufficient for current needs. Some shelters don't allow pets or shopping carts containing a person's belongings. Some people are too proud or embarrassed to stay in a shelter, or say there are people who need it more than they do. For people who are with a partner or family, finding shelter where they can stay together can be difficult. Many shelters are co-ed (men and women sleeping in the same room). Some women may not want to sleep in a room with men. Most shelters do not allow couples to stay together.²⁴⁴ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 20 and 21)

The proportion of Aboriginal people was higher among the street homeless than the sheltered homeless in the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count. On the night of the count, 73% of the Aboriginal homeless population did not stay in a shelter, safe house or transition house. This suggests that shelters do not serve the Aboriginal population well.²⁴⁵ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 21)

Some people have just enough to pay to rent a room in a single-room occupancy hotel (SRO), the least expensive housing that the market can provide (see Teacher Backgrounder p. 11). These are hotels that rent out short-term or long-term accommodation in single rooms typically without private bathrooms or kitchens²⁴⁶. However, some SROs are poorly maintained and in terrible condition, with insect and rodent infestations, cracks in walls and ceilings, broken utilities, and ongoing illegal activities²⁴⁷, making them substandard, unclean and often unsafe places in which to live²⁴⁸.

"Against the choice of that kind of housing, probably many of us would choose to live outside" Judy Graves

6. Properly run social housing will not make a difference to the situation of homelessness. FALSE

"If we had properly run social housing, it would be a lot safer for the people down there and I think it would just be a better situation all round" (Sgt Malcolm Cox, Vancouver Police Department). Currently, there is a lack of affordable social housing in BC. Increasing the social housing stock will help reduce homelessness.

7. 2500-3000 people are homeless in Metro Vancouver. TRUE

According to the 2008 [Metro Vancouver Homeless Count](#)²⁴⁹, 2660 homeless people were counted on count day in Metro Vancouver in 2008, representing a 137% increase in homelessness from 2002, and a 22% increase from 2005. These are people who live in shelters, transition houses, and safe houses (1086 counted) or on the street (1574 counted). See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 13 and 14). How does 2660 compare to the number of students in your school?

8. Homelessness in Metro Vancouver has increased by over 100% since 2002. TRUE

See above, #7

²⁴⁴ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ *Single Room Occupancy Hotels*, BC Housing: <http://www.bchousing.org/programs/SRO>

²⁴⁷ *Punish the slumlords, say advocates*, Pivot Legal Society, January 15, 2009, www.pivotlegal.org/News/09-01-15--slumlords.html

²⁴⁸ *Backgrounder on housing and homelessness* by the Carnegie Community Action Project, 2007,

http://miketodd.typepad.com/waving_or_drowning/files/ccap_backgrounder_on_housing_and_homelessnes.pdf

²⁴⁹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

9. Aboriginal people are over-represented in homelessness. TRUE

People of Aboriginal origin are massively over-represented in poverty and homelessness across BC and Canada.²⁵⁰ According to a 2008 SFU study, an estimated 41% of all Aboriginal peoples in BC are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless.²⁵¹ Even if these estimates are high, they are indicative of the dire homeless situation among Aboriginal populations. In Metro Vancouver, people of Aboriginal origin represent 32% of the region's homeless population, yet only 2% of the region's census population.²⁵² In Kamloops, Aboriginal people represent 39% of the region's homeless population, yet only 5% of the region's census population.²⁵³

According to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, between 2005 and 2008, "homelessness within the Aboriginal population grew at a much faster rate (34%) than within the general homeless population (21%). Also, the incidence of street homelessness was higher (73%) among people of Aboriginal ancestry than among the general homeless population (59%). As well, almost half (45%) of the homeless women counted reported Aboriginal identity, while two out of every five (41%) of the unaccompanied homeless youth were of Aboriginal descent."²⁵⁴ Activity 10 on page 121 addresses some of the issues related to Aboriginal homelessness. See also Teacher Backgrounder (p. 17, 18, 32, 34-40, 42)

10. Housing is not considered a human right by the Government of Canada. TRUE

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not explicitly state that Canadians have a right to a home or to housing or even to shelter. Section 7 of the *Charter* states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice".²⁵⁵ In October 2008, a BC Supreme Court Judge, Madame Justice Carol Ross, used Section 7 of the *Charter* to strike down a Victoria city bylaw that prohibited a group of homeless people from erecting structures to shelter themselves in a city park. According to Justice Ross, the bylaw was unconstitutional because it contradicted the *Charter*. This is explored further in Activity 9: Housing as a Human Right, p. 107.

While Canadian domestic law does not include any explicit recognition of the right to adequate housing, Canada has ratified several international human rights instruments (such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights) "that recognize the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, creating obligations to take steps for the progressive realization of this right....[However], the rights contained in international human rights treaties ratified by Canada are not directly enforceable by domestic courts unless they have been incorporated into Canadian law by parliament or provincial legislatures"²⁵⁶.

²⁵⁰ *Aboriginal incomes in Canada*, by Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur, Simon Fraser University and University of Ottawa http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/Aboriginal_incomes_with_tabs.pdf

²⁵¹ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²⁵² *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁵³ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁵⁴ *Executive Summary: Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Sept, 2008:

http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_Executive_Summary_FINAL_Sept_15.pdf

²⁵⁵ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html>

²⁵⁶ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, *Mission to Canada*. United Nations, 2009, (p. 5)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

Libby Davies, NDP Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, introduced [Bill C-559](#)²⁵⁷, An Act to amend the Canadian Rights Act (social condition). “The bill would amend the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)²⁵⁸ to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of social condition. In doing so it would protect from discrimination people who are experiencing social or economic disadvantage, such as adequate housing, homelessness, source of income, occupation, level of education, poverty, or any similar circumstance.”²⁵⁹ The first reading of the Bill was on June 17, 2010.

In April, 2010, Vancouver-Mount Pleasant NDP MLA Jenny Kwan proposed a private member’s bill that “...would amend the BC Human Rights Code to strengthen protections for the homeless. Kwan’s bill, the Protection of the Homeless Act, would amend the [BC Human Rights Code](#)²⁶⁰ to include the term ‘social condition’ as prohibited grounds for discrimination...This bill would bring British Columbia in line with other jurisdictions across the country...Quebec, New Brunswick, and the Northwest Territories have included ‘social condition’ in their human rights legislation.”²⁶¹

11. Homeless people never find joy in their lives. FALSE

While the lives of homeless people may be difficult and filled with challenges, they are not without joy. In the film, the following individuals refer to joy in their lives: Anne Campbell finds joy in art; Edward Green finds joy in the sky, the stars and being in the open and not locked inside; the man who cleans the street for the Yaletown Sofa Company finds joy and pride in keeping the street clean.

12. Sometimes homeless people get beaten up by wealthier, middle-class people. TRUE

“People are beaten when they’re in the street. When the bars are let out at 4 o’clock in the morning, middle-class young men come out all full of beer and testosterone, and they look for somebody to be their victim, and they beat them severely.” Judy Graves

“We have seen a man who was going around Vancouver and slashing the throats of homeless people. He was recently convicted and received a 13-year sentence because the judge who heard the case labeled his activities as a hate crime. And as a result of being labeled a hate crime, he received a more serious sentence. So it’s not just Vancouver. There are websites on the internet for ‘bag a bum’ and there are videos that are shown where, yes, young middle-class youth go out and beat homeless people with baseball bats.” Sgt Malcolm Cox

“Sometimes they set them on fire and people will show me burns all over their bodies, scars, from having been set on fire. It’s why you rarely see anyone on the street who has zipped up their sleeping bag, because they need to be able to escape.” Judy Graves

13. There is a solution to homelessness. TRUE

As Judy Graves says in the film, “You simply cannot look at this happening to people without being angry. If there were no solutions, then I would just be sad and it would just break my heart. It’s not rocket science. The solution to homelessness is housing....” Ending homelessness is possible. See Teacher Backgrounder p. 44-45.

14. There are things I can do to help end homelessness. TRUE

The suggestions on the next page are given by people interviewed in the film. What are your students’ ideas?

²⁵⁷ See www.libbydavies.ca and *Bill C-599*: http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Bills/403/Private/C-559/C-559_1/C-559_1.PDF

²⁵⁸ *Canadian Human Rights Act*, http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/H-6/page-2.html#anchorbo-ga:l-1-gb:s_3

²⁵⁹ From the speech by Libby Davies to the Speaker of the House of Commons in her motion to introduce Bill C-599, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (social condition), www.libbydavies.ca

²⁶⁰ *BC Human Rights Code*, http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96210_01

²⁶¹ *NDP Private Member’s Bill would protect homeless, vulnerable*, BC NDP, April 14, 2010, <http://www.bcndp.ca/newsroom/ndp-private-member%E2%80%99s-bill-would-protect-homeless-vulnerable>

Reverend Ric Matthews, First United Church

- “Share your resources, deepen your understanding of your circumstance and explore what you have and what you can share or give, even if it’s just information you can share with others.”
- “But it goes way beyond that to what really makes a difference. When people say to me what can they do, I say: The price of the ingredients for a cup of soup: 50 cents. Buying the mug in which we put the soup: \$1.50. The cost of preparing it and boiling it and serving it: \$5.00. Your presence at the table drinking a cup of soup alongside somebody else: priceless. That’s the gift. My challenge to anyone who says I think I really care or I’d like to care is: spend time being here. Not bringing something special. Daring to become vulnerable down here and to know that if you are that, you will be forever changed because when you encounter somebody in need, what you encounter is somebody with tremendous gifts who will make you far more human than you ever thought was possible. And it will transform you. And in the process it becomes a gift to the others.”

David Eby, Lawyer, Pivot Legal Society (and currently Executive Director, BC Civil Liberties Association)

- “On a personal level make a point of correcting myths about homelessness. Intervene and say, ‘Here’s what the real situation is, what it’s like to be homeless, how difficult it is to get out of homelessness and to deal with those issues’”
- “Volunteer and spend some time meeting homeless people and getting to know them, because there is nothing more world altering and view altering than to get to personally know someone who is facing the challenges that homeless people face.”

Judy Graves, Housing Advocate and Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver

- “Each of us can recognize the individuality of everybody that sits in the streets. Each of us can get to know the name of the homeless person that lives near them and say hi to them every day, which will change everything in their world.”
- “It is your responsibility as a citizen of a democracy to go to everyone who is running for office or has been elected into office and let them know that you hold them absolutely accountable for the suffering of every single person that is on the street.”

Karen O’Shannacery, Executive Director, Lookout Emergency Aid Society

- “If people say they’re hungry, take them out for a meal. And instead of just buying the meal, maybe sit down with them for 10 minutes and just talk with them about what brought them there.”
- “I see people that everybody else has written off, and they blossom. You give them a home, you treat them with a little bit of dignity, a little bit of respect, you have a little bit of humour that goes back and forth, they blossom.”

Jodi Iverson, homeless for 8 years

- “How can people help? Basically listen to what we have to say and what we need, and come down and experience what we go through and maybe get a feel of how you felt as a homeless person.”

Mark Townsend, Executive Director, PHS Community Services Society

- “We have to decide ‘We’re going to restrict development and we’re going to make sure that this city has areas for low-income people. There’s going to be rent control, there’s going to be real anti-conversion bylaws that basically make it economically unviable to convert.’ And all those kind of market interventions, you have to have them. Places like New York have them. All big cities have to have them. There’s no choice. This city council had a moratorium on office conversions because they saw that as very serious. So you can interfere with the market if you want to, but there has to have that political will to do that. And if you don’t do it, then there’ll be no space left.”

ACTIVITY 3B: HOMELESSNESS TRUE/FALSE

Do activity 3B if you do not have a copy of the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*.

Students will:

- Gain general understanding of homelessness
- Learn specific facts about homelessness in BC, including the fact that Aboriginal people are over-represented among the homeless population
- Students may dispel some of the misunderstandings they have around homelessness and the population of homeless

Materials:

- Whiteboard/Overhead Projector
- Class Copies of the True and False Sheet (**Activity 3B: BLM 1**)

Activity:

1. Divide class into small discussion groups or into pairs
2. On an overhead projector or a whiteboard, display the following questions. Have each group discuss the opinion of the group and report out to the class:
 - Define “homelessness”
 - Answer: “Why are people homeless?”
3. Pass out True and False Homelessness Myths Sheet (**Activity 3B: BLM 1**) and have students discuss and decide on their answers.
4. Go through answer key (**Activity 3B: BLM 2**) with students and discuss the facts to the answers.
Note: at the end of the answer key is Figure 1 which represents the main identified causes of homelessness. Activity 4 goes into more detail on these causes of homelessness. Activities 6 and 7 focus on the “Affordable Housing” piece within the diagram.

Discussion:

- How has this influenced your ideas around homelessness?
- What has surprised you?
- What was confirmed that you already knew?

Extensions:

1. Watch and discuss videos on the Homeless Nation website: www.homelessnation.org or another film from the film list on pages 147-155.
2. Students listen to a song or read a poem about homelessness and write about and/or discuss its meaning.

Songs: *Mr. Wendal* by Arrested Development (a song about a homeless man)

<http://www.arresteddevelopmentmusic.com>

Song <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyqp2f6VPos&feature=related>

Lyrics <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/arrested-development/mr-wendal.html>

Another Day in Paradise by Phil Collins

Song http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2327g_phil-collins-another-day-in-paradis_music

Lyrics http://www.lyricsfreak.com/p/phil+collins/another+day+in+paradise_20108035.html

Poetry: *Hundred Block Rock* by Bud Osborne (1999) (A book of poems about Vancouver's downtown eastside), Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC, www.arsenalpulp.com , ISBN: 1-55152-074-5

3. Do the extra True/False statements from Activity 3A (below). See **Activity 3A: BLM 2** for answers.

- There is no federal housing program in Canada
- Many people who are homeless would rather live outside than in the housing that's available to them
- Properly run social housing will make things much safer
- Homelessness in Metro Vancouver has increased by over 100% since 2002
- Housing is not considered a human right by the Government of Canada
- Sometimes homeless people get beaten up by wealthier, middle-class people
- There are things I can do to help end homelessness

Name: _____

Block _____

Facts around Homelessness	
1. All people who are homeless live on the streets or in basic emergency shelters	True or False
2. There are approximately 2600 homeless people in Metro Vancouver	True or False
3. In BC, more men than women live on the street or in emergency shelters	True or False
4. Most homeless people are men in their late twenties to early thirties	True or False
5. In some places, such as Metro Vancouver, homelessness among women is rising faster than among men	True or False
6. Counting the number of homeless people is an easy task	True or False
7. Aboriginal people are over-represented in homelessness in BC	True or False
8. Homelessness occurs only in big cities like Vancouver and not in smaller towns	True or False
9. Homeless people do not have a legal source of income to pay for rent	True or False
10. Expensive rents for housing is one of the causes of homelessness	True or False
11. Many people who are homeless have a mental illness and/or a drug addiction	True or False
12. There is a solution to homelessness	True or False

1. All people who are homeless live on the street or in basic emergency shelters. FALSE

Many people who are homeless live on the street, in back lanes, parks, alcoves and similar public spaces, and many spend their nights in emergency shelters, safe houses or transition houses.

However, as well, a large number of homeless people do not live on the street or in shelters, but exist out of sight of, or *hidden* from, public view. They are people who do not have enough money to pay for their shelter. They live in places not fit for human habitation or move continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by friends, families or strangers, and tend not to have control over the length and conditions of their stay. The hidden homeless are sometimes referred to as 'couch surfers'.

“They live in cars. They find temporary beds in church basements or abandoned buildings. They sleep on somebody’s couch. They are seniors on fixed incomes. They are adults with full-time jobs. Many are children.”²⁶²

While it is known that the hidden homeless exist, there is no reliable method to identify or quantify them and thus they may not be regarded by policy and decision makers. Nevertheless, they are part of the homeless population.²⁶³ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 8-9)

2. There are approximately 2600 homeless people in Metro Vancouver. TRUE

According to the 2008 [Metro Vancouver Homeless Count](#)²⁶⁴, 2660 homeless people were counted on count day in Metro Vancouver in 2008, representing a 137% increase in homelessness from 2002, and a 22% increase from 2005. These are people who live in shelters, transition houses, and safe houses (1086 counted) or on the street (1574 counted). See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 13 and 14). How does 2660 compare to the number of students in your high school?

3. In BC, more men than women live on the street or in emergency shelters. TRUE

“However, women may be undercounted in homeless counts because *women tend to be part of the “hidden homeless” population*, couch surfing or living in substandard housing, often because they do not feel safe being on the streets or in emergency shelters.” See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 16)

4. Most homeless people are men in their late twenties to early thirties. FALSE

According to the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, “*The face of homelessness is changing. In the past, the majority of the homeless were men who were dealing with addiction and mental health issues. That is no longer the case. The face of homelessness and of those at risk of homelessness is often youth, particularly aboriginal youth, single parents and women, as well as men.*”²⁶⁵ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 16)

5. In some places, such as Metro Vancouver, homelessness among women is rising faster than among men. TRUE

In Metro Vancouver, “Men continue to make up a higher percentage of the homeless population than women, with 72% compared to 27% respectively. The number of women who were homeless increased by 16% from 2005, compared to an increase of 13% among men”²⁶⁶

²⁶² *The Hidden Homeless*, Raising the Roof <http://www.hiddenhomeless.ca/>

²⁶³ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

²⁶⁴ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁶⁵ *Surrey Homelessness*, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, <http://surreyhomelessnessandhousing.org/resources/homelessness-in-surrey/>

²⁶⁶ *Executive Summary: Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Sept, 2008: http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_Executive_Summary_FINAL_Sept_15.pdf

6. Counting the number of homeless people is an easy task. FALSE

The homeless are difficult to count, and homeless counts are probably undercounts because:^{267 268}

- (1) Many people who would be considered homeless don't respond to or participate in homelessness counts, (i.e. they refuse to be interviewed, are asleep and cannot be roused, or are otherwise unconfirmed as homeless);
- (2) The homeless are difficult to find; and
- (3) Counts usually exclude the hidden homeless, including "couch surfers" and people in detoxification facilities, recovery houses, correctional facilities and hospitals who do not have a place to go when they leave.

See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 12)

7. Aboriginal people are over-represented in homelessness in BC. TRUE

People of Aboriginal origin are massively over-represented in poverty and homelessness across BC and Canada.²⁶⁹ According to a 2008 SFU study, an estimated 41% of all Aboriginal peoples in BC are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless.²⁷⁰ Even if these estimates are high, they are indicative of the dire homeless situation among Aboriginal populations. In Metro Vancouver, people of Aboriginal origin represent 32% of the region's homeless population, yet only 2% of the region's census population.²⁷¹ In Kamloops, Aboriginal people represent 39% of the region's homeless population, yet only 5% of the region's census population.²⁷²

According to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, between 2005 and 2008, "homelessness within the Aboriginal population grew at a much faster rate (34%) than within the general homeless population (21%). Also, the incidence of street homelessness was higher (73%) among people of Aboriginal ancestry than among the general homeless population (59%). As well, almost half (45%) of the homeless women counted reported Aboriginal identity, while two out of every five (41%) of the unaccompanied homeless youth were of Aboriginal descent."²⁷³

Activity 10 on page 121 addresses some of the issues related to Aboriginal homelessness. See also Teacher Backgrounder (p. 17, 18, 32, 34-40, 42)

8. Homelessness occurs only in big cities like Vancouver and not in smaller towns. FALSE

Homelessness is a problem throughout BC, in large cities as well as in small towns. According to the Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005, "While homelessness is most visible in the major metropolitan areas, smaller cities and the social service agencies within them also report an increase in the number of homeless people. Smaller

²⁶⁷ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁶⁸ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²⁶⁹ *Aboriginal incomes in Canada*, by Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur, Simon Fraser University and University of Ottawa http://www.sfu.ca/~pendakur/Aboriginal_incomes_with_tabs.pdf

²⁷⁰ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

²⁷¹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁷² *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁷³ *Executive Summary: Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Sept, 2008: http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_Executive_Summary_FINAL_Sept_15.pdf

communities tend not to have a reliable source of information that provides a picture of the extent of the problem. This lack of reliable data makes timely community action difficult and may contribute to an apparent lack of awareness among local officials and politicians of the real extent of homelessness.²⁷⁴ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 14 and 15)

9. Homeless people do not have a legal source of income to pay for rent. FALSE

Income assistance/welfare: In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 43% of homeless people reported income assistance as a main source of income.²⁷⁵ In Kamloops in 2005, 34% reported being on income assistance.²⁷⁶ In Metro Vancouver, more youth than the general homeless population reported having no income or reported panhandling as a source of income.²⁷⁷ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 19)

The working poor: Contrary to popular belief, many homeless people work for an income. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 19% of the total homeless population (one in five people) and 27% of the sheltered population reported having full-time, part-time or casual employment. Even with an income, they still could not afford to rent a place in the region.²⁷⁸ In Kamloops in 2005, 15% of homeless people had full, part-time or casual employment.²⁷⁹ See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 19 and 28)

10. Expensive rents for housing is one of the causes of homelessness. TRUE

The main drivers of homelessness are high rents and a low supply of affordable housing, lack of income and a lack of support services. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 25-33)

11. Many people who are homeless have a mental illness and/or a drug addiction. TRUE

The homeless have a very high incidence of mental illness. Approximately 33% of homeless people suffer from mental illness; however estimates vary a lot, ranging from 25% to 50%. In some subgroups, the percentage can be higher. For instance, in Toronto in the late 1990s, the prevalence of mental illness among homeless women was 75%.²⁸⁰

The homeless also have a very high incidence of drug addiction. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, approximately 60% of homeless people reported having an addiction. More research about addictions on the street is needed to answer questions such as “are more people becoming homeless because of addictions or do homeless people become addicted once they are homeless?”²⁸¹

Substantial overlap between drug addiction and mental illness is common, with many people being diagnosed with both severe addiction and mental illness (SAMI). It is estimated that between 8000 and 15,500 individuals

²⁷⁴ Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁷⁵ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁷⁶ Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁷⁷ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁸⁰ *Taking responsibility for homelessness: An action plan for Toronto*, Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force by A.

Golden, W. Currie, E. Greaves and J. Latimer, 1999, Toronto.

²⁸¹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

with SAMI are absolutely homeless across BC, and between 17,500 and 35,500 are inadequately housed *and* inadequately supported.²⁸²

See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 17, 22, 28, 31, 32)

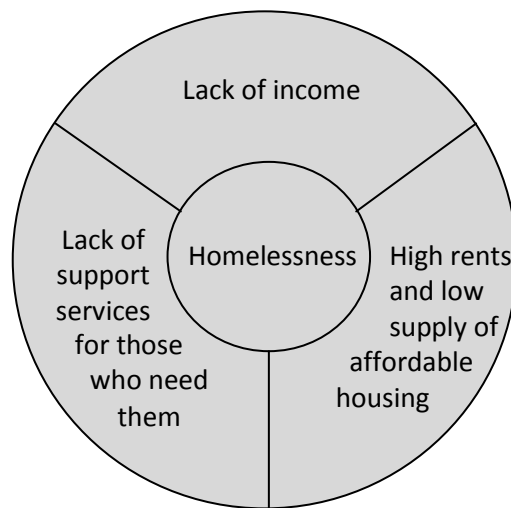
It is important to note that every condition and illness (including mental illness and drug addiction) found among the homeless is also found among people who are housed. Why aren't they homeless? Most likely they are not homeless because they have support from family, friends and the community and/or enough wealth to keep them housed. While they are associated with homelessness, and can contribute to and be aggravated by homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness do not cause homelessness on their own. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 31, 32, 33)

The main drivers of homelessness are high rents (due to a low supply of affordable housing) and poverty, along with a lack of support services. See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 25) and Figure 1 below.

12. There is a solution to homelessness. TRUE

Ending homelessness is possible. We know how to do it and have done it before. We had much less homelessness along with more social programs and publicly-funded housing options in the past. It takes commitment on the part of citizens and governments to make things happen. See Teacher Backgrounder, p. 44-45. And see **Activity 3A: BLM 2**, p. 5-6 for suggestions of what your students can do.

Figure 1 - A combination of factors contribute to homelessness:



See Teacher Backgrounder (p. 25)

²⁸² *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

ACTIVITY 4: 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

Materials:

- Copy of **Activity 4: BLM 1** for each student
- **Activity 4: BLM 2** on overhead, or as a handout for each student
- Copy of **Activity 4: BLM 3** for each pair of students
- Copy of **Activity 4: BLM 4** for each student (or pair of students)

Activity:

1. On the handout provided (**Activity 4: BLM 1**) invite students individually to brainstorm all the ‘things’ they think they need to have what they would consider a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ day, from the time they get up, until the time they go to bed. Discuss the difference between a ‘want’ and a ‘need.’ Students should feel free to add more circles if needed.
2. After they have a complete list, ask them to share with a neighbour. Then facilitate a class discussion, writing some common themes on the board. What are some common ‘things’ we feel we need to have a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ day? You can also have students refer to the Search Institute’s “40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents” at: <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>. Developmental assets are “building blocks of healthy development....that help young children grow up healthy, caring and responsible.”
3. Next, ask student to rank the 10 most important things or aspects in order of importance in the space provided, using the same criteria as above. What decisions have they made? What was most important and what never made the list at all?
4. Explain the theory of Maslow’s hierarchy (**Activity 4: BLM 2**), either on the overhead or as a handout and facilitate a discussion. Does this theory change what they have listed, or the order they have listed it? Then ask students to think about what they know about homelessness and how this might connect with Maslow’s hierarchy. Facilitate a discussion to assess what students know, or think they know, about homelessness.
5. Introduce the concept of factors and effects by describing the scenario in **Activity 4: BLM 3** and ask them to complete the activity in pairs. Explain that effects can be intended, unintended, short-term and long-term. Write responses on board, hopefully flushing out ideas such as the ones on the next page:

Factors to Consider			
Make friends		Desire for sport scholarship	
Friends on the team		Something to do	
Love of sport		Like the coach	
Effects (or Consequences)			
Intended	Unintended	Short-term	Long-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made friends • Spent time with friends • Got better at sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was injured • Homework sometimes not done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saw many schools and new people at tournaments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got in shape • Learned skills

6. Hand out **Activity 4: BLM 4** and ask students to read the backgrounder on homelessness (pages 1 - 5), highlighting the information they think is most important. This is an abbreviated version of the information found on pages 25-32 in the Teacher Backgrounder, so you may choose to give students the longer version. Facilitate a discussion. What was new information or existing knowledge? Did anything surprise them?
7. Organize students in pairs or small groups with chart paper and markers. Using their knowledge about Maslow's hierarchy, factors and effects, and homelessness, students will create a web diagram to demonstrate their learning, similar to the example provided below. Encourage students to be as specific as possible (e.g. 'poverty' is a general contributing factor, whereas 'low income' or 'loss of job' is more specific).
- write **'homelessness'** in a circle in the middle of the page (see sample on following page)
 - on the left side write **contributing factors** with arrows going into the homelessness circle, with the most important factors in the largest circles
 - on the right side, write **effects of homelessness** with arrows going from the homelessness circle to each effect circle, with the most important effects in the largest circles and short-term effects closer than long-term effects

Discussion:

When complete, have groups report out to the class about their chart and justify what they put and the size they gave for their factors and effects. Facilitate a discussion drawing out the following:

- What is the pattern you notice?
- Did some effects themselves become contributing factors? If so, are more arrows needed to show interconnectedness? How can we show the 'spiral' effect? The 'two-way' between factors and effect?
- Which comes first – homelessness or drug addiction? Homelessness or mental illness?
- What are some ways to stop the spiral of this web diagram?
- To what extent do you think homelessness is a result of 'bad luck,' misfortune, or random life events beyond a person's control, versus conscious life choices? See **Activity 4: BLM 4**, p. 6 of 6.

Extensions:

- Consider and discuss the quotations on the following page.
- Have your students go through the steps of applying for income assistance: <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm>. How difficult do you think this might be if you were homeless? What might make it challenging for you? (E.g. *mental illness, disability, head injury, addiction, no support, complexity of the form....*). How challenging do you think it would be to get out of poverty?

“Many people become addicted to crack-cocaine after they become homeless because they can’t afford to sleep. They are afraid that they will be robbed while they’re asleep. The drug keeps them awake.”

Judy Graves, Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver, 2010

“There is no doubt that health conditions, including mental health and addictions, contribute to and are aggravated by not having a place to live. Living on the streets and in emergency shelters is not good for one’s well-being. But homelessness isn’t caused by addictions or mental illness. Homelessness is caused by a lack of affordable housing, and in some cases a lack of affordable housing with appropriate support services for people who have difficulty accessing and maintaining adequate housing.”

2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count ²⁸³

“There is no doubt that mental illness, chemical dependency and a range of other conditions contribute to, and are often aggravated by, not having a place to live. Living on the streets and in emergency shelters for any length of time is not good for one's mental and physical well-being. However, every pathology found among people without housing is also found, in greater numbers, among people who are housed. The majority of people who suffer from any of these diseases or disorders are not houseless....

Effective policy approaches to address the pathologies of people who have no place to live are different in only one important way from those who have housing: before any assistance can really work, people without housing must have a stable and adequate place to live - a place to call home. Housing stability is essential for successful treatment and recovery. Adequate housing, combined with supportive services, meaningful daily activity in the community (including work), and access to appropriate therapy, is the necessary framework to address mental health and chemical dependency problems.”

David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto ²⁸⁴

“Unfortunate things happen to people everywhere, but they result in homelessness mainly when the person faces high rent and has low income.”

Krishna Pendakur, Professor of Economics, Simon Fraser University

²⁸³ *Still on our streets: final report on the 2008 Homeless Count, FAQ, September 2008*, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness,

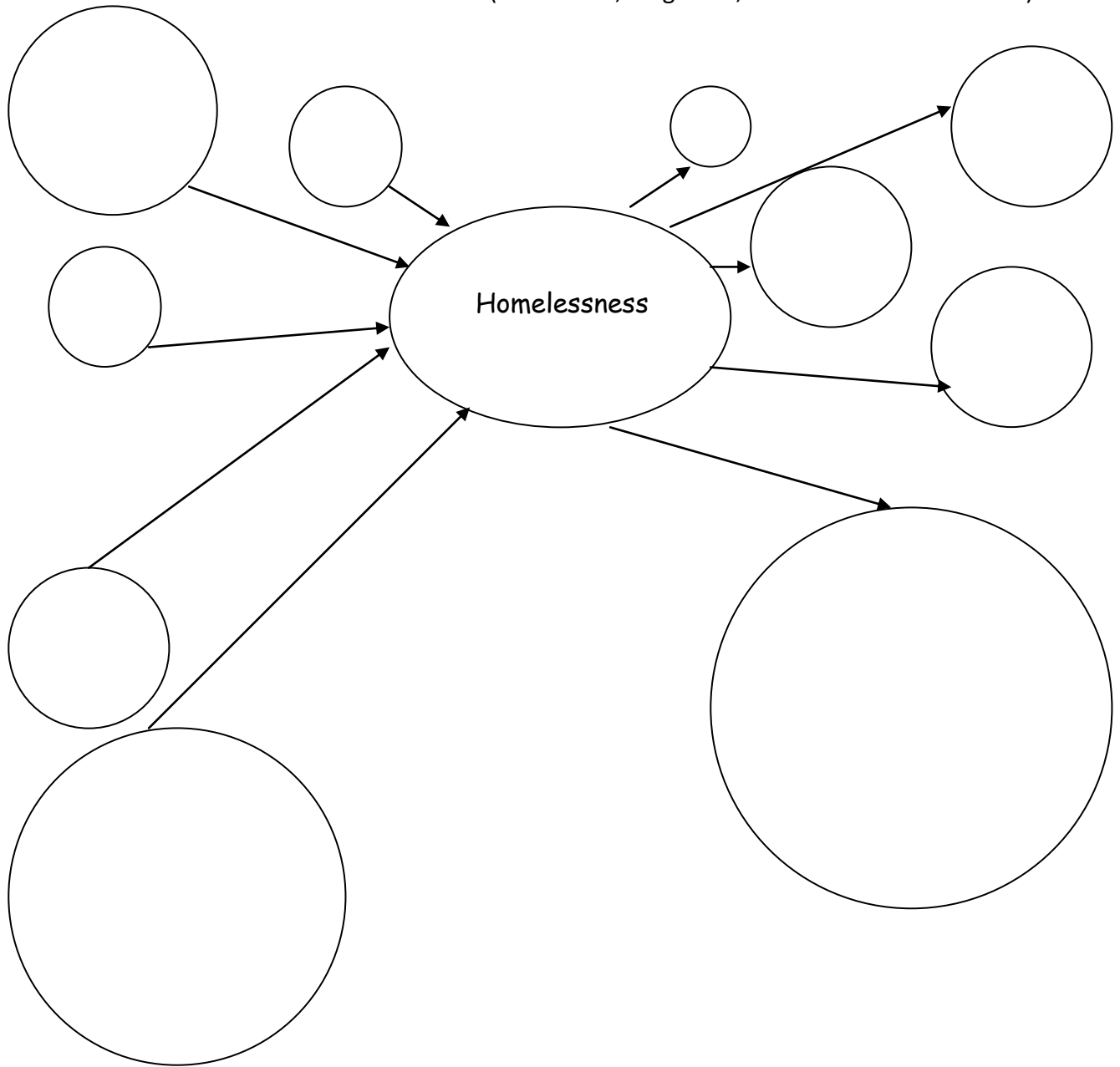
http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/web_2008_Count_FAQ%20_Final_Release_Sept_15.pdf

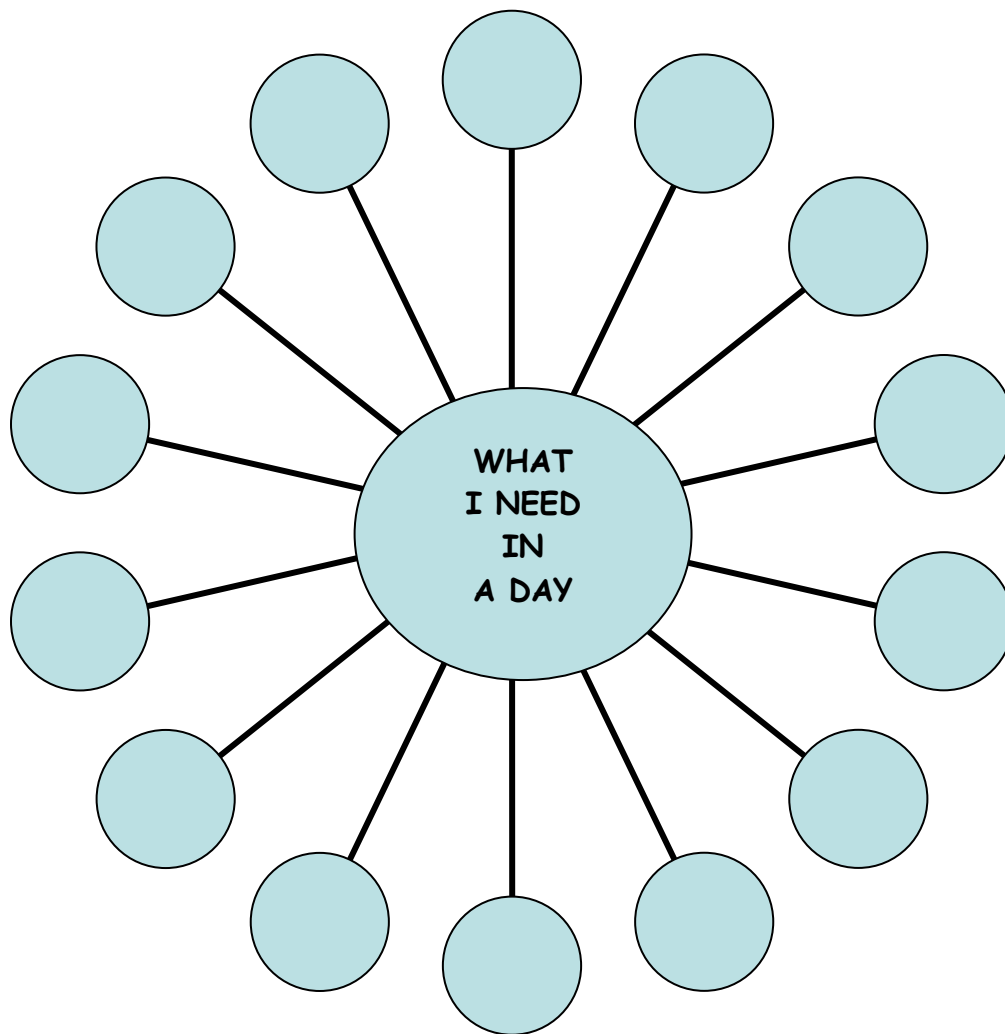
²⁸⁴ *What is homelessness? Question and Answer* by J. David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-home-QandA-index.cfm#5>

FACTORS

EFFECTS

(short-term, long-term, intended and unintended)



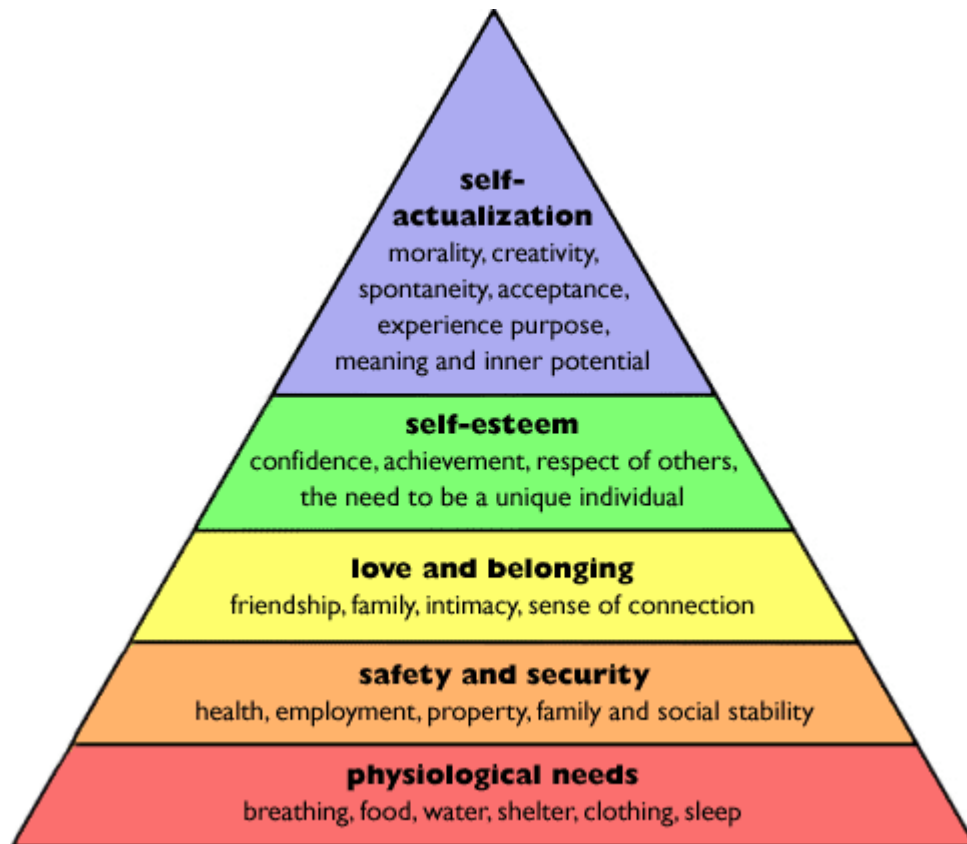


10 Most important things I need, in order of importance....

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology created by Abraham Maslow. It states that every human being has certain fundamental needs and until the basic needs on the bottom of the pyramid are met, humans cannot satisfy the areas higher up. In other words, if people are starving, thirsty, without shelter or safety, they will be unable to meet their needs of esteem or self-fulfillment.

The needs on the bottom are considered *deficiency needs* and must be satisfied to avoid unpleasant feelings or consequences. These are the needs that motivate behaviour. The highest level on the pyramid is a *growth need*, and stems not from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow and achieve fulfillment as a person.



Scenario

Casey has joined a basketball team knowing the time commitment and effort it will require. What are some of the factors that led her to join a basketball team? In other words, why would she join? What are some of the effects?

Factors (Why did she join)

Effects (or Consequences) (can be positive or negative)

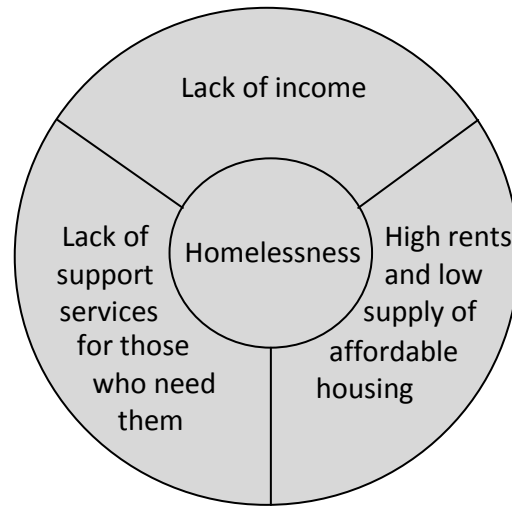
Intended	Unintended	Short-term	Long-term

In the 1970s and 1980s there was barely any visible homelessness in big cities like Vancouver and other parts of BC. What has changed? Why are so many more people homeless today?

People are vulnerable to homelessness as a result of a combination of factors:

1. They lack income, and
2. They live in a place where rents are high and there is a low supply of affordable housing, and
3. They do not have access to support services if they need them.

Figure 1 –
A combination of factors contributes to homelessness



The homelessness we see on the streets today and have seen over the past decade is a *new* phenomenon. It has emerged as the product of two major trends: first, **market forces** have increased economic inequality in Canada; and, second, successive **governments** have made decisions that have left our society's most vulnerable people without access to income, affordable housing and support services.

1. LACK OF INCOME

A) ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Over the last 30 years, all rich countries including Canada have seen increased economic inequality. Despite overall economic growth in BC and Canada, and although *average* incomes have risen slowly over time, the incomes of people at the bottom of the income distribution have stagnated or fallen. This means that they have less money available to spend on housing and other necessities, and may not have enough to sustain a reasonable standard of living.

B) GOVERNMENT POLICY

One of the characteristics of the Canadian mixed-market economy is the role of government in influencing the economy "in an attempt to rectify some of the failures of the market system"²⁸⁵. The federal and provincial governments develop programs to **redistribute** income in favour of the less fortunate in order to reduce poverty and to ensure that all members of society live safe, healthy, secure lives.

²⁸⁵ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Our governments do this by transferring income and other resources from people who have a lot of money to people who have little or nothing. For example, the BC provincial government provides income assistance (or welfare) to people who have very little or no income by writing them a cheque each month. The provincial government also regulates minimum wage and training wage levels. Minimum wage is the lowest hourly wage that employers may legally pay employees. It is meant to ensure that employees earn enough to keep them from living in poverty. One of the reasons that we see so many more homeless people in BC today is because of government policies and regulations.

Government Policy Example 1 - Changes to Income Assistance in BC

a) The purchasing power of income assistance has declined: Income assistance rates in BC have not kept pace with the cost of living. While incomes at the bottom end of the income distribution have stagnated or declined, the income assistance rates of the provinces across the country have also declined, with the result that income assistance rates relative to cost of living are at their lowest level since the mid-1980s and, in all provinces, are far below Statistic Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (\$14,303/year before taxes for a single person in a rural area, and \$20,778/year in an urban area²⁸⁶).

Since April 1, 2007, the rate of income assistance in BC for a single adult has been \$610/month (\$7320/year). Of this, \$375 is allocated to shelter costs. A person receives this shelter component only if they are paying rent (so someone in an emergency shelter will not receive it) leaving \$235 (the support component) for all other expenses (food, transportation, bills, etc). In Metro Vancouver, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$935/month and for a bachelor is \$755/month. In BC, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$862 and for a bachelor is \$703²⁸⁷. There is virtually nowhere that a single person can rent for \$375/month.

A 2008 study by the Fraser Institute²⁸⁸ computed the amount of money necessary to survive for a year without endangering one's health. They found that a minimal poverty line for a single adult in 2007 in Canada was about \$10,520 per year, suggesting that *single individuals on income assistance need approximately 35-50% more money than current rates just to survive.*

b) Changes in eligibility rules make it harder to obtain income assistance: Not only are income assistance rates low relative to the cost of living, but, in 2001, the BC government introduced new rules, making it more difficult to navigate through the system and to receive income assistance.

As a result, some people no longer qualify for income assistance and many others have given up applying because the process is too difficult and takes too long – even though they are eligible to receive it. Although the provincial government has since removed some of the barriers to getting income assistance, many who are eligible still do not get it. When people are cut off from income assistance, they cannot even afford a room in a single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel, the least expensive housing that the market can provide. Without money to pay rent, moving inside is impossible.

²⁸⁶ *Low income before tax cut-offs for economic families and persons not in economic families, 2005*, Statistics Canada, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/tables/table-tableau-18-eng.cfm>

²⁸⁷ *Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights*, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Spring 2009 http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64487/64487_2009_B01.pdf

²⁸⁸ *What is Poverty? Providing Clarity for Canada* by Chris Sarlo, The Fraser Institute, May 2008, http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/What_is_Poverty.pdf

Government Policy Example 2 – Low Minimum Wage and Training Wage in BC

Many people who are homeless are employed. In Metro Vancouver in 2008, 19% of homeless people had full-time, part-time or casual employment.²⁸⁹ In Kamloops in 2005, 15% of homeless people had full, part-time or casual employment.²⁹⁰ Even with an income, they still could not afford a place to rent.

It is likely that they are working for minimum wage. In 2001, the BC provincial government increased minimum wage in BC from \$7.60 to \$8 per hour. Today in 2010 it is still \$8/hour, now the lowest rate in Canada.²⁹¹ Also in 2001, the BC government introduced a ‘first job’ or training wage of \$6 an hour, which applies to the first 500 hours worked in any job and applies to all new workers.²⁹²

Not only are these rates low in absolute terms (a full-time employee earning minimum wage would make about \$14,000 per year), but the value of minimum wage has declined over the past 30 years. In 1975 a person earning minimum wage would earn 122% of the poverty line. Today, minimum wage is about 80% of the poverty line for a single person.²⁹³ Minimum wage has thus not kept pace with inflation or cost of living.

C) UNFORTUNATE OR DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE

Sometimes, people are poor because of unfortunate or difficult circumstances beyond their control which impact their ability to earn an income. Difficulties can happen to anyone, but they can leave a person poor and at risk of homelessness *when that person has no forms of support or income*.

These circumstances can include job loss; long-term unemployment; substance abuse; mental illness; physical illness; disability; marital/family breakdown and violence; childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse; brain damage through an accidental head injury; being born with foetal alcohol syndrome; history of foster, group and institutional care; neglect in childhood; low levels of education; history of reading and learning difficulties; untreated systemic disease; and many others.

Any number of things can happen, all of which can impact a person’s ability to earn an income. This does not mean that all people experiencing some sort of misfortune will be poor. Rather, people who are poor tend to have had something happen to them that makes it hard for them to earn an income and afford housing and, possibly, hard for them to live independently without support services in the housing that is available to them. These factors can leave them extremely vulnerable to homelessness.

Each misfortune can also lead to, as well exacerbate, others, so that one person can have many factors in his or her background that make it more and more difficult for the person to earn an income. The Province of BC uses the term “Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers” to recognize individuals who are unable to achieve financial independence because of specific and severe multiple barriers to employment.

²⁸⁹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*, Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness,

www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

²⁹⁰ *Kamloops Homeless Count, 2005*, <http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf>

²⁹¹ *Current and forthcoming minimum hourly wage rates for experienced adult workers in Canada*, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Government of Canada, <http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt1.aspx?lang=eng>

²⁹² *Current and forthcoming minimum hourly wage rates for young workers and specific occupations*, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Government of Canada, <http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt3.aspx?lang=eng>

²⁹³ *Backgrounder on housing and homelessness*, Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), 2007, http://miketodd.typepad.com/waving_or_drowning/files/ccap_backgrounder_on_housing_and_homelessnes.pdf

2. HIGH RENTS AND LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WHY ARE RENTS HIGH? Rents are high because, while the demand for rentals has stayed high, the supply of rentals has declined (supply and demand – for a fixed demand, if the supply decreases, the price rises).

WHY IS THE SUPPLY OF RENTAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS LOW? The supply of rental and affordable housing units (including social and cooperative housing and other low-cost housing) is low because governments and developers in the private housing market stopped building them. We have had a shrinking supply of affordable housing and rental units for a few decades.

A) GOVERNMENT POLICY: Decrease in the supply of government funded affordable housing

Federal government - In 1993, the federal government ended Canada's national housing program. This program used to provide funds to each province to build affordable, social housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government built a lot of housing, financed a lot of housing and supported socially-mixed housing developments, cooperative housing and other forms of low-cost housing across Canada. During those years, there was very little homelessness across Canada. With the decentralization of federal responsibilities starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, the federal government stopped providing housing and let provincial governments take control. We have seen a great increase in homelessness since then.

BC provincial government - BC Housing, the provincial crown agency that develops, manages and administers subsidized housing options in BC, was actively building affordable social housing in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, BC Housing stopped building affordable, subsidized housing. Only recently has BC Housing started building units again. As a result of BC Housing's lowered activity over the last decade, there has been an overall drop in the supply of affordable housing units.

B) PRIVATE HOUSING MARKET: Decrease in the supply of affordable rental units in the private market

Condominiums versus rentals - Prior to the mid-1970s, private developers built apartment buildings primarily for rent. Essentially, this was because there was no law to govern how people could own a building in common. The easiest solution at that time was to have one owner, and that owner would rent out all the apartments to different people.

Then, starting in the late 1960s, provincial and city governments began supporting the creation of *condominiums*, which are buildings with multiple units, each of which is owned by someone different. This legal innovation essentially eliminated the advantage of building apartment buildings for rent. Since that time, almost all privately built apartment buildings in Canada have been condominiums rather than rentals. People who live on low incomes lack the large down payment for condos.

'Building booms' of new expensive housing - Increased economic inequality (seen in all rich countries over the past three decades) has resulted in a greater number of rich people living in big cities like Vancouver and elsewhere in BC. In cities where land is scarce this has resulted in rising land prices. Since housing uses land, this has pushed up the price of housing (including rentals) in general.

Because wealthy people can afford to pay for expensive new housing, these cities have experienced large 'building booms' of expensive new housing as well as the conversion and renovation of old housing into expensive housing that is 'just like new', or the demolition of old housing that is replaced with expensive new housing. As a result, older, less expensive housing becomes scarce, and the older housing that remains becomes more expensive (given stable demand, the decreased supply of less expensive older housing leads to a growth in its price).

Effect of rent control - Another legal device that may affect the price of rents and the supply of rentals is rent control. Rent control is great for people who already have rental accommodation---their rents don't rise quickly. However, where rents are controlled, but owned prices are not, private developers have a further reason to favour building accommodation they can sell to owners rather than building rental units. Over time, this reduces the amount of rental stock private builders want to build.

3. LACK OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Many homeless people are homeless because they cannot manage their affairs effectively without support. Many have substance addictions; many have or show symptoms of a mental illness; many have multiple challenges. Generally, when support services are lacking, hard to access or poorly coordinated, homeless individuals may find it difficult or impossible to get off the streets and into housing, or to remain housed once in housing. Supportive housing (housing with appropriate support services) is seen as a best practice for people with one or more challenges, and is crucial to ending homelessness.

Also, when support services are not culturally appropriate for the population they are serving, then people in need may not use them. For example, Aboriginal homeless services must be culturally appropriate and controlled by Aboriginal service providers in order to be effective, and support services that target Aboriginal women need to increase. A high percentage of BC's homeless population is Aboriginal. If support services are not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people or relevant to their particular needs, then a large number of homeless people may not be well served by the existing services.

As well, support services that are appropriate and adequate for other groups, including youth, women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and other groups with special needs (e.g. people with HIV/AIDS, people with head/brain injuries), also need to be provided.

Support services typically include:

Outreach programs	Abuse prevention and victim support	Good nutrition
Drop-in centres	Community networking and referral systems	Substance abuse services
Legal aid, advocacy	Education and training opportunities	Employment services
Mental health services	Life skills training and counselling	Health / dental care services

Many support services are funded by the provincial government, so the lack of these services is tied to government decisions about how to spend its money. In some cases, the responsibility for homeless services is spread among a number of different government departments, including health, social services, housing, corrections, education and policing. This can result in a lack of coordination of services and uneven levels of service provision for different homeless populations in different regions.

Homelessness and Random Life Events

Random Life Events Matter: The random events that people experience in life can play an immense role in individual outcomes (i.e. how a person's life turns out). Random events are different from choices. **Choices** are what we control. **Random events** (or personal circumstance), whether fortunate or unfortunate, difficult or easy, are beyond a person's control. Some people refer to this as luck or bad luck.

“Whether we are rich or poor may depend in large measure on our inheritance. It may depend on how fortunate we were in owning a plot of well-located or mineral-rich land. Or, it may depend on having the kind of skills that just happen to command a high price in the market”²⁹⁴

Examples of fortunate random events: inheriting a lot of money; buying land before the price increases; training in a career in which there are jobs today and that happens to pay well; being born with great health; being born into a caring, nurturing family.

Examples of difficult random events: job loss; illness; dissolution of marriage; training in a vocation for which there are no jobs today; mental illness; being born with a disability; violent death of a close family member; sexual abuse (often by a parent or other trusted family member); brain damage through an accidental head injury or “shaken baby syndrome”; being born with autistic spectrum disorder or foetal alcohol syndrome.

Some people experience difficult random events, but will end up ok because they have supports in other areas of their lives.

- A man loses his job and can't afford to pay rent, but because he has a supportive family, he has a place to live while he looks for another job.
- A teenager develops a mental illness. Because his family fully supports him and he is able to receive the appropriate medical care, he is able to complete high school and eventually go to university and get a good job.
- A woman's marriage dissolves and she and her children have to move out of their home, but because she has a good job and enough money, she can easily support herself and her children on her own.

Some people experience great difficulties *and* they have very little money or no support from family, friends or the government to help them out.

They can end up poor and homeless because of difficult random life events that are beyond their control, *not* because of the choices they made.

²⁹⁴ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 261.

ACTIVITY 5: HOMELESS VOICES – STORIES OF FORMERLY HOMELESS YOUTH

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of the causes of youth homelessness and ways to end it

Materials:

- Access to internet in order to watch the 11-minute film: *Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Voices of Experience* by Raising the Roof: www.raisingtheroof.org. Click on the box “Youth Share Personal Stories of Homelessness” on the left hand side of the screen.
- Copies of **Activity 5: BLM 1** for each student (optional)

Watch the video before doing the activity and approach this lesson with sensitivity if you know or suspect that any of your students are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or formerly homeless, or if they are close to or know anyone who is homeless, or if you think any of your students will find the stories and discussing them difficult for any reason.

Activity:

1. Before watching the video, ask students what they know about youth homelessness. How might it be different from adult homelessness? What might be some of the causes of youth homelessness? (See Backgrounder, p. 41). If you wish to use **Activity 5: BLM 1**, hand it out to students before watching the video, and instruct them to take notes as they watch.
2. Watch the video.
3. After watching the video, facilitate a class discussion.
 - What did you learn from the video?
 - What surprised you?
 - How did you feel hearing the youths’ stories?
 - What were some of the reasons the youth in the video ended up living on the street? What was common among all of the youth in the video? What was different?
 - What helped them get off the street? What was common in this respect among all of the youth in the video?
 - What did you learn from this video about ways to end youth homelessness? What would you recommend?

Follow up:

Read the Raising the Roof National Report on Youth Homelessness in Canada: *Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions* <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-youth-index.cfm>

Other films about youth homelessness:

Metamorphosis: An In-Depth Look at the Life of Former Street Kids (Vancouver) (2005) (Jennifer Mervyn)

This documentary features four BC youth, two of whom are aboriginal, who tell their stories about life on the streets and what they had to do to leave that life behind them. Politicians, police, and front-line workers are interviewed for their input in what helps facilitate exits from homelessness for young people. Concerns raised in the film include lack of available treatment for youth struggling with substance abuse, the need for treatment on demand, the deficits in the “4 Pillars Approach”, and the challenges of the Young Offenders Act. The film takes a critical look at the resilience factors in youth leaving the street, and examines the process of transition that successful youth have made. Powerful and thought-provoking, *Metamorphosis* raises important questions about the changes we need to make to help future youth successfully transition off the street.

Contact: email Jennifer Mervyn at jennifermervyn@hotmail.com

No Way Home: Canada's Street Kids (Toronto) (2004) (42 min) (The Fifth Estate, CBC)

In this harrowing examination of Canada's street youth and shelter system, Hana Gartner traces the journey of three kids who ran away at age 13 to the gritty, violent reality of the streets. Learn how they navigate through the dark corners of society: panhandling, abusing drugs and selling their bodies. The documentary offers a rare glimpse of the country's homeless youth – about 75,000 of them – through the eyes of the kids, the Toronto mom "Angel", and the unusual shelter she operates.

Website (Fifth Estate): http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/main_nowayhome.html

Contact: email CBC Learning at cbclearning@cbc.ca

Purchase online at:

http://www.cbclearning.ca/CBCEDS/shopping/product.aspx?CatalogName=CBCEDSBase&CategoryName=family_studies_all_family_studies_titles&Product_ID=Y8G-03-07&&Variant_ID=Y8G-03-07-010101

Stories of Strength, a short film by Vancouver Coastal Health (2007) (12 min), includes the stories of individuals who, in their youth, were faced with the challenges of a mental illness and/or addiction. See film description and contact information on p. 151.

Homeless Nation's website (www.homelessnation.org) includes short videos about and by homeless youth

Further reading:

Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC (2007) The McCreary Centre Society, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf

BC's child poverty rate still Canada's highest CBC News, November 24, 2009

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/11/24/bc-child-poverty-report.html>

BC Campaign 2009: 2009 Child Poverty Report Card

<http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/provincial/BritishColumbia/2009ReportCard.pdf>

Girl Homelessness in Canada, Justice for Girls (2007), Prepared for Parity Magazine Australia,

<http://www.justiceforgirls.org/publications/pdfs/ParityArticle.pdf>

The following articles and many others on youth are available at the Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca

- Who are Street Youth?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=46117&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1
- Why do Young People Become Homeless?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Why-do-Young-People-Become-Homeless-46121.aspx
- Why Street Youth Panhandle
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Why-Street-Youth-Panhandle-46124.aspx
- Do Homeless Youth Get Enough to Eat?
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Do-Homeless-Youth-Get-Enough-to-Eat-46127.aspx
- Attitudes about Homelessness – How We Think about Homeless Youth Matters
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Attitudes-about-Homelessness-46122.aspx
- Youth homelessness
www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Youth-268.aspx
- Whose Safety Counts Street Youth, Social Exclusion and Criminal Victimization by Stephen Gaetz
www.homelesshub.ca/Library/32-Whose-Safety-Counts-Street-Youth-Social-Exclusion-and-Criminal-Victimization-45795.aspx?search=Gaetz%2c+Stephen&orgSearchString=Gaetz%2c+Stephen

Websites:

Youthworks: Partners Solving Youth Homelessness <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/lrn-youth-index.cfm>

Urban Native Youth Association www.unya.bc.ca

	Reasons for being on the streets	Challenges living on the streets	What helped him/her leave the streets?	Life now
Adam				
Maddie				

	Reasons for being on the streets	Challenges living on the streets	What helped him/her leave the streets?	Life now
Demar				
Emily				

	Reasons for being on the streets	Challenges living on the streets	What helped him/her leave the streets?	Life now
Adam	<p><i>Parents abandoned him a few weeks before his 14th birthday</i></p> <p><i>He was in an empty house, no food.</i></p>	<p><i>Places he slept could be cold</i></p> <p><i>Survival mode was challenging (where will I sleep? What will I eat? Who can I trust? Where's a safe place?)</i></p> <p><i>Dealing with anger</i></p>	<p><i>He got assistance from the Resource Assistance for Youth</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Works full time during the summer at bike shop</i> - <i>Going back to school</i> - <i>Working on a community project for an after-school program</i> - <i>Anger under control</i> - <i>He has goals</i> - <i>Not dealing with addictions</i> - <i>Not succumbing to bullies</i> - <i>He's matured</i>
Maddie	<p><i>She 'aged out' of foster care</i></p> <p><i>She had 4 months left of high school, but had to stop</i></p>	<p><i>Scared</i></p> <p><i>Could see that she could have become a victim of the streets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The shelter helped her continue and finish her education</i> - <i>Put her fear aside, pushed herself forward to achieve her goal to have own place; personal drive</i> - <i>Coped with things day by day, step by step</i> - <i>Community support workers (e.g. Broadway Resource Centre, Covenant House)</i> - <i>Brothers and sisters taught her what to do/not do</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Her positive attitude ("you have to keep looking forward; you have to not let what happened affect you so majorly that it stops you from your main goal")</i> - <i>Life is great</i> - <i>New apartment that BRC got her, creating a stable life for her and her son</i> - <i>Sees herself going back to Whistler to work</i>

	Reasons for being on the streets	Challenges living on the streets	What helped him/her leave the streets?	Life now
Demar	<p><i>Being gay; family was very homophobic</i></p> <p><i>Living at home was hard; lots of issues to deal with; atmosphere toxic</i></p> <p><i>Had no support at that time</i></p>	<p><i>Concern of being exploited and not knowing where to go</i></p> <p><i>Fear of not getting housing and remaining on the street</i></p>	<p><i>Getting Toronto housing</i></p> <p><i>The social worker who helped him prepare to go to school</i></p> <p><i>Getting OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program)</i></p>	<p><i>Feels secure because has a roof over his head and doesn't need to think about living on the streets</i></p> <p><i>Feels good about himself</i></p> <p><i>He has a lot of accomplishments</i></p> <p><i>He's in school</i></p> <p><i>Life is really good</i></p>
Emily	<p><i>Started living on the street when she was 18. We don't know the reasons.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Good: she had friends on the street, making it more comfortable.</i> - <i>Bad: cold sleeping outside in alleys, doorways, rooftops; people judged her; she was vulnerable to a lot – experiences/situations that could be trouble; uncertainty of where next meal would come from, where she would sleep; living day by day, no plans, no structure, no goals</i> 	<p><i>Paul Donovan from Community Youth Network helped her even though she was resistant to help. He kept trying. Without him she'd probably still be on the street. He was very supportive, helped her fill out social assistance application, find a place, obtain GED (high school equivalency), get food</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>There are a lot of things she wants to do</i> - <i>Stable home for her son</i> - <i>Having a home took the stress of being young off her shoulders</i> - <i>When she found out she had a home, it took the edge off life; gave her structure, a sense of responsibility. It was a very good feeling.</i>

ACTIVITY 6: COULD YOU AFFORD IT? THE RENT REALITY

Students will:

- Analyze and understand the difficulty of finding affordable housing in your community

Materials:

- Newspapers with the rental section OR a computer lab with access to online rental information for your community and nearby communities.
- A copy of **Activity 6: BLM 1** for each student or pair of students
- One or more scenarios from **Activity 6: BLM 2** for pair or small group of students (if time permits, each pair or small group can do all five scenarios).
- (Extension) A copy of **Activity 6: BLM 3** for each student

Activity:

4. With students or in small groups, brainstorm costs associated with living independently in an apartment (example: rent, food, transportation, bills, etc.)
5. Give each pair or small group of students the instructions for the activity (**Activity 6: BLM 1**) and one or more scenarios (see scenarios on **Activity 6: BLM 2**). Students do the activity according to the instructions.
6. Pairs or small groups report their findings to the class.

Discussion: (may be used to report out to the rest of the class OR as a written reflection assignment to hand in next day in class)

- How did you feel looking for housing given your income restrictions and the incomes you currently made? Were there any surprises to your findings?
- If there wasn't affordable housing, what other options could you look into? *If students suggest giving up one of the standards of adequacy, suitability or affordability, which many people do in an expensive city like Vancouver, ask them if they believe this would necessarily leave them in core housing need or at risk of homelessness? According to CMHC, it would (see below under "Related Discussion Questions" and Teacher Backgrounder p. 9, 10 and 11).*
- What are some of the challenges involved in surviving on a low income in a high-rent region?

Related Discussion Questions

- Do you think the standards for acceptable housing (i.e. adequacy, suitability and affordability) are reasonable, relevant and meaningful measures of housing deprivation?
- Middle-income and low-income people in an expensive city like Vancouver cannot necessarily meet all three standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability as defined by CMHC. Very likely they are going to have to give up one of them in order to find a place they can afford. Which standard would you give up? The suitability standard (and share your home with others)? The affordability standard (and spend 30-50% or more of your income on rent, and less on other things)? Or will you live in a place that is less adequate than you would like, and give up on the quality (and live in a basement suite, which, while not as nice as an above-ground suite, is cheaper)? If people cannot meet one of the adequacy, suitability and affordability standards, does this necessarily make them housing deprived? CMHC says it would. Do you agree?
- With respect to affordability, one could ask: could rich people be said to be living in unaffordable housing by this measure? In cities where housing is expensive (e.g. London, New York, Vancouver), many wealthy people will be spending more than 30-50% of their income on housing. Does this mean

their housing is not affordable? What do you think? Why? Is 30% of income the most reasonable and relevant measure of housing affordability for all cases? Why?

- The CMHC standards for housing acceptability (adequacy, suitability and affordability) can also make it expensive to build social housing for low-income people. Social housing is one type of affordable housing. It usually refers to rental housing that is subsidized by the government. If the housing has to meet all three of the acceptability standards, it can be expensive to build. One way to address the cost is to relax CMHC standards. This means that very small (i.e. not suitable) housing units are allowed to be built; however, this is not addressing homelessness fast enough to meet the demand for low income housing. What are your thoughts around relaxing the standards?

Extension Activity/Further Reading:

- Students Read the Handout: **Where do Homeless People Sleep? (Activity 6: BLM 3)**
- Suggestions
 - a. Have students comment on their own impressions of homelessness after having done today's activity and reading. This can be in a journal or reflection format.
 - b. Have students discuss scenarios of homelessness they have encountered and the impact it has on society

Instructions for: “Could You Afford It? The Rent Reality”

For one or more scenarios, find an acceptable place to live. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), “the term **ACCEPTABLE housing** refers to housing that is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable.”

- **ADEQUATE** housing does not require any major repairs, according to residents.
- **SUITABLE** housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements. Enough bedrooms based on NOS requirements means one bedroom for each cohabiting adult couple; unattached household member 18 years of age and over; same-sex pair of children under age 18; and additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under 5 years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom. A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e. a unit with no bedroom).
- **AFFORDABLE** housing costs **less than 30% of before-tax household income**. For renters, shelter costs include rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services.” Furthermore, people are said to be **at risk of homelessness if they spend at least 50% of their income** on rent.

A household is in **core housing need** if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards AND the household would have to spend more than 30% of its income to pay the rent of alternative housing that meets all three standards. A household that does not meet the adequacy and suitability standards AND is paying 50% or more of their income on rent is at risk of becoming homeless.

Source: *The Canadian Housing Observer, 2009* by the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC), www.cmhc.org

YOUR TASK:

1. Calculate the monthly take-home pay of the person in the scenario.
2. Add in any other living costs associated with this person.
3. Search apartment rental information for your community and/or nearby communities and find a place to live given your person’s reality. Keep in mind the costs you calculated in 1 and 2.
 - ** If you could not find appropriate housing, suggest possibilities for housing.
 - ** Suggest the minimum income required in order to afford housing.
4. Put yourself ‘in the shoes of’ the person in the scenario. Consider the long-term stress of your circumstances and the role these circumstances play in your emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Think about self-esteem and self-worth. Think about your choices or lack thereof.
5. Report your findings to the rest of the class, including your scenario, calculations and findings.

Scenarios

Adapted and used with permission of Urban Coalition, Vancouver, 2010

Welfare/Income Assistance Scenario

You are a single person on income assistance, and receive \$610.00/month from the government. You have a mental illness that causes you to be suspicious and afraid of other human beings. You have not been able to find work.

- a. Where in your city can you afford to live?
 - b. What are your top two frustrations?
 - c. Where do you find beauty in your life?
 - d. Is there anything that gives you joy?
 - e. Where do you find security and safety?
-

Disability Scenario 1

You are a single person with a disability. Your income from disability insurance is \$906.00/month. Your back was injured in an accident 5 years ago and you live with chronic pain.

- a. Where in your city can you afford to live?
 - b. What happens to your income if you find a job that you are able to do with your limitations?
 - c. What if the job pays less than the disability?
 - d. Where do you find beauty, joy and fulfillment?
 - e. What are your top two frustrations?
 - f. Where do you find security and safety?
-

Disability Scenario 2

You are a single mum with a disability. You live in chronic pain after an accident that injured your back. You earn \$1242 per month from disability insurance. You have a five-year old daughter and receive about \$250 per month from the Universal Child Care Plan and the Canada Child Tax Benefit. Your daughter would like to take ballet lessons and play hockey. You need to pay rent, buy nutritious food, pay bills (e.g. phone, heat/electricity), pay for transportation (bus pass), and buy clothes for your growing daughter.

- a. Where in your city can you afford to live?
 - b. What happens to your income if you find a job that you are able to do with your limitations?
 - c. What if the job pays less than the disability?
 - d. What are your top two frustrations?
 - e. What are your top two worries?
 - f. Where do you find beauty, joy and fulfillment?
 - g. Where do you find security and safety?
-

Working Poor Scenario

You have a 40hr/week job that pays you \$8.00/hour (minimum wage) and includes benefits. You have a three-year old daughter, and earn about \$250 per month from the Universal Child Care Plan and the Canada Child Tax Benefit. Because your daughter is so young, you must pay to put her in day care.

- a. Where do you find beauty/joy in life?
 - b. What are your top two frustrations?
 - c. Where do you find security/safety?
 - d. What happens if you or your child gets sick and you have to miss two days of work?
-

No Income Scenario

You have zero income. You are homeless.

- a. How do you survive?
 - b. What are your top two frustrations?
 - c. Where do you find joy and beauty in life?
-

WHERE DO HOMELESS PEOPLE SLEEP?

Outside or in unsafe dwellings: People who are absolutely homeless sleep in a variety of places, typically outside or in unsafe dwellings: on park benches, in nooks and crannies in stairwells and doorways, in bank machine outlets and bushes, in bus shelters, on sidewalk grates, in parking garages, under bridges, in cars, in tents and other makeshift shelters in abandoned industrial sites, parks, caves and underground tunnels, on factory or store rooftops, and in abandoned buildings²⁹⁵. These places aren't necessarily safe, nor are they always warm, dry and comfortable. Where homeless people sleep can leave them vulnerable to violence, theft, illness and sleep-deprivation.

Emergency shelters: Some homeless people sleep in emergency shelters and drop-in centres that are funded and run by provincial and municipal governments, churches, and other community groups. As well as offering homeless people a temporary, short-term place to sleep, shelters often also provide food and other services and can connect homeless people to support services, such as health, addiction counselling, advocacy and housing support. Shelters typically have restricted hours, such as from 6pm to 10am, and people typically enter on a first-come-first-served basis. Some shelters cater to men only, some to women only, some to youth only, and some to men, women and children. Not all shelters allow shopping carts and pets, nor do they all have laundry facilities.²⁹⁶

“While shelters are necessary to accommodate emergency needs, they do not provide long-term solutions to homelessness....Many shelter users occupy beds on a repeat or prolonged basis because appropriate housing is not available.”²⁹⁷

Transition houses typically provide longer-term, safe and supportive housing for people who are working towards the goal of living independently in the community. They may be women who are fleeing abusive situations, people who are mentally ill, or people recovering from addictions. The length of time a person stays in a transition house can vary and is typically dependent on individual needs. Support staff members are on-site to provide an array of services. Many transition houses provide a place where people can re-establish their self worth, learn skills, and re-discover their place in society.

Couch Surfing: Approximately half of BC's homeless population is estimated to “**couch surf**”, that is, they sleep in the homes of friends or family (and sometimes strangers), but don't have a place of their own. In northern communities where the weather is colder, couch surfing is more common. In particular, women and youth tend to couch surf rather than live in situations that could be more dangerous, such as on the streets or in shelters.²⁹⁸ Couch surfers are part of the “hidden homeless” population (homeless people who are ‘hidden’ from view), along with people who live in cars, find temporary beds in church basements or abandoned buildings.

²⁹⁵ *Homelessness: How to end the national crisis* by Jack Layton, Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008.

²⁹⁶ *Emergency Shelter Program*, BC Housing, <http://www.bchousing.org/programs/ESP>

²⁹⁷ *Homeless Action Plan*, City of Vancouver, June 2005, p. 7, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

²⁹⁸ *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, 2008, <http://www.carmha.ca/publications/documents/Housing-SAMI-BC-FINAL-PD.pdf>

Why do some homeless people sleep on the street when they could stay in an emergency shelter?

There are several reasons why homeless people may not stay in a shelter^{299 300}:

- Shelters can be unsafe places where people are vulnerable to being harmed physically and/or sexually. Some people may find it safer to sleep outside.
- Shelters may be unclean and noisy.
- Many shelters have strict rules, including restrictions on the length of time a person can stay. Some people find it hard to live within the shelter's rules. Shelter curfews can be especially problematic for women working the streets.
- Theft can be common in shelters.
- Sometimes people want to stay in a shelter, but are turned away either because of it being full or because they are inappropriate for the shelter. An individual is considered "inappropriate" for a shelter if they are too young to stay in an adult shelter or too old to stay in a youth shelter, if there are no beds available for their gender, or if they are intoxicated or "high". While low-barrier³⁰¹ shelters do exist, they are insufficient for current needs.
- Some homeless people don't know where shelters are or how to get to them, or they arrive too late to be allowed in.
- Some shelters don't allow pets or shopping carts containing a person's belongings, and there is a lack of secure storage space for valuables.
- Some people are too proud or embarrassed to stay in a shelter, or say there are people who need it more than they do.
- For people who are with a partner or family, finding shelter where they can stay together can be difficult. Most shelters do not allow couples to stay together.
- Many shelters are co-ed (men and women sleeping in the same room). Some women may not want to sleep in a room with men.
- On the night of the homeless count in Metro Vancouver in 2008, the proportion of Aboriginal people was higher among the street homeless than the sheltered homeless. 73% of the Aboriginal homeless population counted did not stay in a shelter, safe house or transition house. This suggests that shelters do not serve the Aboriginal population well. This can be due to perceived discrimination, religious beliefs and cultural intolerance.
- Some people would rather sleep outside.

²⁹⁹ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

³⁰⁰ Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy: www.gvss.ca

³⁰¹ "Low Barrier Housing: Housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to live there. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to services. In housing this often means that tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol or other drugs, or from carrying on with street activities while living on-site, so long as they do not engage in these activities in common areas of the house and are respectful of other tenants and staff. Low-barrier facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy." From: HeretoHelp, a BC information resource for individuals and families managing mental health and substance abuse problems. Available: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/visions/housing-homelessness/bck/3>

ACTIVITY 7: THE ECONOMICS OF HOUSING: WHY IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING DIFFICULT TO FIND?

Students will:

- Understand the influences that 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)*

Materials:

- 5 Scenarios (**Activity 7: BLM 1**) – a copy for each group, or copies for each student.
- A copy of each graphing chart for each group or each student (**Activity 7: BLM 2**).
- Optional: Whiteboard or Overhead Projector to view graphs, depending on report-out format

Activity:

1. Brainstorm the following question with students: **“What could cause rent to be high?”**

Note: Keep these ideas on a side board/overhead for referral at the end of class.

2. Explain to students that high rent and low supply of affordable housing has been influenced by events and choices which have taken place over many years. These influences have occurred within the “free market” as well as through government policy choices. In a way, it is like a puzzle of events which all work together. In this lesson, they will each be given a portion of the puzzle (scenarios) which will help solve the question they’ve begun discussing.
3. Divide students into groups: there are 5 attached scenarios (**Activity 7: BLM 1**), each representing a main cause for high rents or low availability of affordable housing.
4. Ask each group to read their scenario and on the chart provided (**Activity 7: BLM 2**) show the effects on price of housing and quantity of affordable housing. They will need to determine if: (See Teacher Answer Key, **Activity 7: BLM 3**)
 - a. It is a demand shift or a supply shift.
 - b. Indicate on the graph the effects on PRICE of rental housing as well as QUANTITY of affordable rental housing.
 - c. Once finished, students will share with the rest of the class, either on the whiteboard or cumulatively on an overhead made from “THE DECLINE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING” sheet

Discussion: Ask the following questions of the class:

- Compare the results of our findings with those we started with at the beginning of class. (answers will vary)
- Has the decline of affordable housing been more of a supply OR demand issue? (Supply)
- How might this situation be addressed so that more affordable housing might be available for people? What solutions could be addressed from a government point of view? What incentives might be required to help people afford housing in a very expensive rental housing market?

Extension Activity/Further Reading:

Students research what municipal, provincial or federal governments are currently doing to address the issue.

SCENARIO 1

Federal government: In 1993, the federal government ended Canada’s national housing program. This program used to provide funds to each province to build affordable housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government built a lot of housing, financed a lot of housing and supported socially-mixed housing developments, cooperative housing and other forms of low-cost housing across Canada. During those years, there was very little homelessness across Canada. With the decentralization of federal responsibilities starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, the federal government stopped providing housing and let provincial governments take control. In 1998, the mayors of the largest Canadian cities declared homelessness a national disaster³⁰². We have seen a great increase in homelessness since then.

BC provincial government: BC Housing, the provincial crown agency that develops, manages and administers subsidized housing options in BC, was actively building affordable social housing in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, BC Housing stopped building affordable, subsidized housing. Only recently has BC Housing started building units again. As a result of BC Housing’s lowered activity over the last decade, there has been an overall drop in the supply of affordable housing units.

TASK: Using the chart given to you, graph what has happened to the demand or the supply of affordable housing. Draw a demand and supply graph using quantity of affordable housing on the “x” axis and price of housing on the “y” axis graph.

- Show how the scenario above would shift either the demand or the supply side of the graph.
- Indicate the effect on price and quantity

³⁰² *Housing and Parliamentary Action*, Parliamentary Research Branch, Government of Canada, 1999, <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/modules/prb99-1-homelessness/housing-e.htm>

SCENARIO 2

Condominiums versus rentals: Prior to the mid-1970s, private developers built apartment buildings primarily for rental. Essentially, this was because there was no law to govern how people could own a building in common. The easiest solution at that time was to have one owner, and that owner would rent out all the apartments to different people.

Then, starting in the early 1970s, provincial and city governments began supporting the creation of *condominiums*, which are buildings with multiple units, each of which is **owned** by someone different. This legal innovation (first put into law in BC in 1966 in the form of the Strata Titles Act, and now called the Strata Property Act) essentially eliminated the advantage of building apartment buildings for rental. Since that time, almost all privately built apartment buildings in Canada have been **condominiums rather than rentals**.

People who live on low incomes don't tend to buy homes, such as condominiums, because buying a home requires a lot of money all at once. Low-income people are more likely to rent than to buy.

TASK: Using the chart given to you, draw a demand and supply graph using quantity of affordable housing on the "x" axis and price of housing on the "y" axis graph.

- Show how the scenario above would shift either the demand or the supply side of the graph.
- Indicate the effect on price of housing and quantity of affordable housing.

SCENARIO 3

'Building booms' of new expensive housing (Part 1): Increased economic inequality (seen in all rich countries over the past three decades) has resulted in a greater number of rich people living in big cities like Vancouver and elsewhere in BC. In cities where land is scarce, or "fixed" in the amount available, there have been rising land prices. The price of land has gone up. Why has this happened? Is the cause coming from a demand or supply effect?

TASK: Using the chart given to you, draw a demand and supply graph using quantity of land on the "x" axis and price land on the "y" axis graph. Note: supply of land is fixed!

- Show how the scenario above would shift either the demand or the supply side of the graph.
- Indicate the effect on price and quantity
- How would this ultimately affect prices of rental housing?

SCENARIO 4

'Building booms' of new expensive housing (Part 2): Because wealthy people can afford to pay for expensive new housing, these cities have experienced large 'building booms' of expensive new housing as well as the conversion and renovation of old housing into expensive housing that is 'just like new', or the demolition of old housing that is replaced with expensive new housing. As a result, older, less expensive housing becomes scarce, and the older housing that remains becomes more expensive (given stable demand, the decreased supply of less expensive older housing leads to a growth in its price). The result in a city like Vancouver and some other places in BC has been a scarcity of less expensive housing. And the price of that "less expensive" housing that remains has become very high.

TASK: Using the chart given to you, draw a demand and supply graph using quantity of housing on the "x" axis and price of housing on the "y" axis graph. Label the equilibrium point as "E" (Equilibrium of affordable housing).

- Show how the scenario above would shift either the demand or the supply side of the graph.
- Indicate the effect on price and quantity

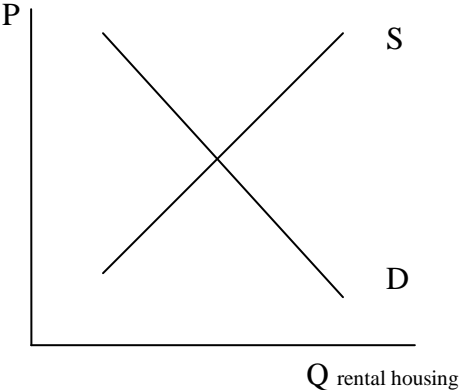
SCENARIO 5

Effect of rent control:³⁰³ Another legal device that may affect the price of rents and the supply of rental units is rent control. By definition, rent control places a maximum price on the amount a landlord can charge for rent. For those renting, rent control is beneficial because rental prices do not rise quickly. However, this may not be as beneficial to landlords in a market where owned prices for housing are not controlled. In this case, it is more beneficial or profitable to build accommodation that can be sold to owners rather than rented. Over time, this reduces the amount of rental stock that private builders want to build. Consequently, rent control is a double-edged sword when it comes to low-cost housing---it keeps rents low, but also keeps supply low.

TASK: Using the chart given to you, draw a demand and supply graph using quantity of affordable housing on the "x" axis and price of housing on the "y" axis graph.

- Would rent control be a price ceiling or price floor? Indicate on your graph.
- How are private housing developers reacting to rent controls? Does rental control cause private developers to build more or less housing?
- How would that ultimately effect quantity and price of affordable housing?

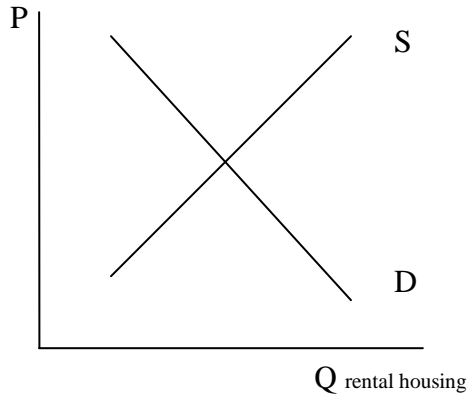
³⁰³ More generally, rent control, defined typically as a ceiling on the annual increase that a landlord can charge, holds down the rents for people *already* in a rental apartment, but raises rents for people who are outside the rent-controlled market.



THE DECLINE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING (Demand and Supply)

GRAPHING SPACE		Briefly describe how the scenario has contributed to a decline in affordable housing
Provincial and Federal Changes in Housing Policy		
<i>Scenario 1</i> Federal and Provincial Government Choices		
Changes in Private Ownership		
<i>Scenario 2</i> Condominiums versus rentals		

GRAPHING SPACE		Briefly describe how the scenario has contributed to a decline in affordable housing
<p><i>Scenario 3</i></p> <p><i>'Building booms' of new expensive housing – <u>part 1</u></i></p>		
<p><i>Scenario 4</i></p> <p><i>'Building booms' of new expensive housing – <u>part 2</u></i></p>		
Legal Devices Affecting Decisions in the Private Sector		
<p><i>Scenario 5</i></p> <p><i>Effect of rent control</i></p>		



TEACHER KEY - THE DECLINE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING (Demand and Supply)

GRAPHING SPACE		Briefly describe how the scenario contributed to less affordable housing
Provincial and Federal Changes in Housing Policy		
<p><i>Scenario 1</i></p> <p>Federal and Provincial Government Choices</p>	<p>Graph should show a decrease in the Supply curve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices increase • Quantity decreases 	<p>With the decentralization of federal responsibilities starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, the federal government stopped providing housing and let provincial governments take control. We have seen a great increase in homelessness since then.</p>
Changes in Private Ownership		
<p><i>Scenario 2</i></p> <p>Condominiums versus rentals</p>	<p>Graph should show a decrease in the Supply curve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices increase • Quantity of affordable housing decreases 	<p>There is a decline of rental units and in their place (shown graphically) condominiums (owned) have been built.</p>

GRAPHING SPACE		Briefly describe how the scenario contributed to less affordable housing
<p><i>Scenario 3</i></p> <p>'Building booms' of new expensive housing – <u>part 1</u></p>	<p>This scenario would show a perfectly inelastic supply curve for land (vertical), with a downward sloping demand curve for land. The shift occurs in the increased demand for land only, supply of land remains constant. This causes the price to increase without an increase in supply of land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity of land is fixed • Price of land increases as demand increases. 	<p>Note: land prices are an input cost to the supply of housing – a rise in the cost of land causes a general increase in costs. Private landowners have in turn increased the rents they charge OR have chosen more profitable uses for their land (example: building and selling condominiums) See scenario 4.</p>
<p><i>Scenario 4</i></p> <p>'Building booms' of new expensive housing – <u>part 2</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices increase • Quantity of affordable housing decreases 	<p>An increase in expensive new housing as well as the conversion and renovation of old housing into expensive housing causes a decrease (shift left) of the supply curve.</p>
Legal Devices Affecting Decisions in the Private Sector		
<p><i>Scenario 5</i></p> <p>Effect of rent control</p>	<p>This graph needs to show a price ceiling.</p>	<p>Price ceilings are a disincentive for the creation of affordable housing. Allowing lower rents is not an incentive for the creation of more rental units. Instead, private developers have chosen more profitable uses for their land (example: building and selling condominiums)</p>

ACTIVITY 8: THE RIGHTS BALLOON

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of human rights

Materials:

- A copy of *The Rights Balloon* worksheet (**Activity 8: BLM 1**) for each student.

Activity:

1. Pass out *The Rights Balloon* activity sheet to each student. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine that they are alone in a hot-air balloon floating high above the ground. Describe what they might see. Tell them they each have 10 'rights' on board with them and that each weighs 2 kg. Suddenly, the balloon begins to drop. To stop descending, they must throw a right overboard. Once they have tossed out a right, the balloon levels out. Soon, it begins to descend again. They must choose another right to throw out. This continues until they have only one right left in the balloon.
2. Ask students to look at their worksheet and choose carefully which rights from the list they are prepared to surrender, and which they want to keep as long as possible. Instruct them to make their decisions, without discussion, by putting a number 1 beside the first right they would throw overboard, number 2 beside the second and so on. The last right they would throw out is #10.
3. Students share responses with a partner (or in groups of 3) and compare their choices.

Discussion:

- How did you feel doing this activity? What was easy? What was difficult? Why?
- Which rights could you surrender?
- Which items on the list are rights and which are wants? What is the difference between a right and a want?
- Are there any rights so 'basic' that you would never surrender them? Why?
- How would you define a human right?

The concept of human rights is based on the belief that whoever or wherever we are we have rights simply because we are human beings. A right is something we are entitled to in order to survive, have our basic needs met, and to have a meaningful, healthy, satisfying life. "A right is a legal, moral, or social claim that people are entitled to, primarily from their government"³⁰⁴. Canadians' rights are protected at a number of levels. At the national level, rights are enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Each province has its own Human Rights Code (e.g. the BC Human Rights Code). Rights are also enshrined at the international level in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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³⁰⁴ From *Law in Action: Understanding Canadian Law*, by Annice Blair, William Costiniuk, Larry O'Malley and Alan Wasserman, Pearson Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2003, p.77

Name: _____

The Rights Balloon

The right to:	#
Nutritious food	
An education	
My own bedroom	
Health care	
A home	
My own iPhone	
Love and affection	
Holidays	
To have my opinions heard	
An allowance	



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ACTIVITY 9: HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

THE CANADIAN 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
- 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
- Learn that in Canada, housing is not a right

Background information:

- Knowledge of human rights (suggested prior activity - Activity 8: The Rights Balloon)
- Knowledge of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and that constitutional law can override any Canadian law that is deemed unconstitutional.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is a bill of rights that protects the political and civil rights of citizens of Canada from the policies and actions of all levels of government. It came into force on April 17, 1982. The *Charter* is entrenched in the Constitution Act, 1982, which is part of the Constitution of Canada. The Constitution of Canada outlines Canada’s system of government and the civil rights of all Canadian citizens. It is the supreme law in Canada. Constitutional law can override any Canadian law that is deemed “unconstitutional”. “The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is perhaps the most significant part of the Constitution. Entrenching the *Charter* in the Constitution gives these laws constitutional status. Any law or government action violating these constitutional laws may be declared invalid and struck down.”³⁰⁵

Materials for Activity Part 1:

- Copy of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* for each pair of students (available at: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html>) or internet access so students can look it up online

Materials for Activity Part 2:

- Copy of Reading 1 for each pair or small group of students: **Activity 9: BLM 1**
- Copy of Reading 2 for each pair or small group of students: **Activity 9: BLM 2**
- Copy of Reading 3 for each pair or small group of students: **Activity 9: BLM3**
- Copy of Reading 4 for each pair or small group of students: **Activity 9: BLM 4**
- Copy of Student Self Assessment for each student: **Activity 9: BLM 6**
- Copies of U-Shaped Discussion Teacher Assessment: **Activity 9: BLM 7**

³⁰⁵ From *Law in Action: Understanding Canadian Law*, by Annice Blair, Willian Costiniuk, Larry O’Malley and Alan Wasserman, Pearson Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2003, p. 60

ACTIVITY 9 PART 1: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

1. Lead-in from “Rights Balloon” activity from Activity 8: Focus on the “right to a home”. What is a home? Is it a human right? Is this something we are entitled to that our governments should guarantee we have? What do you think?
2. Students in pairs examine the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (available at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html>) to see if there is anything in the *Charter* about a right to a home or a right to housing.

Discussion:

In a full group discussion, ask students what they discovered.

N.B. Nowhere in the *Charter* is it explicitly stated that Canadians have a right to a home or to housing or even to shelter. However, Section 7 of the *Charter* states “*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice*”.

Discuss with students whether or not they think that Section 7 (“*the right to life, liberty and security of person*”) would include the right to housing or shelter? Why or why not? If so, under what conditions? Should it? Should the *Charter* explicitly include the right to housing? Do you think people who do not have housing should be prohibited from putting up their own kind of shelter in public places, such as parks? Should they be allowed to?

ACTIVITY 9 PART 2: The Victoria (City) v Adams Case (U-Shaped Discussion)

Information on the Victoria (City) v Adams Case:

The *Victoria (City) v Adams* BC Supreme Court case is an example where a Judge used Section 7 of the *Charter* to strike down a city bylaw she saw as unconstitutional, and to support homeless people erecting shelters in a Victoria City park.

The Victoria (City) v Adams Case (2008 BCSC 1363)

In October 2008, a BC Supreme Court Judge, Madam Justice Carol Ross, struck down a Victoria city bylaw that prohibited a group of homeless people from erecting structures to shelter themselves in a city park. The bylaw made “it an offence for anyone to ‘take up a temporary abode overnight’ or ‘erect or construct, or cause to be erected or constructed, a tent, building or structure, including a temporary structure such as a tent, in a park’”³⁰⁶. According to Justice Ross, the bylaw contradicted the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because the prohibition on seeking shelter in public violated the people’s right to life, liberty and security of person (Section 7 of the *Charter*).

The full case is available at:

- [2008 BCSC 1363 \(http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/Jdb-txt/SC/08/13/2008BCSC1363.htm\)](http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/Jdb-txt/SC/08/13/2008BCSC1363.htm)

Readings 1 – 4 for students:

Teachers can choose which of the following four readings they would like their students to read. It is recommended that students read at least one or more of the readings in support of Judge Ross’s ruling (Readings 1, 2, 3) AND the reading opposed to Judge Ross’s ruling (Reading 4).

³⁰⁶ From *Homelessness and the Charter: Victoria v Adams* by Kevin Tilley, October 23, 2008, available: <http://www.thecourt.ca/2008/10/23/homelessness-and-the-charter-victoria-v-adams/>

Opinion pieces and articles in support of Judge Ross' ruling:

- **Reading 1 - Activity 9: BLM 1 - Homelessness and the Charter: Victoria v Adams** by Kevin Tilley, October 23, 2008, published on The Court website (www.thecourt.ca), an initiative of Osgoode Hall Law School, York University. The article is also available online at: www.thecourt.ca/2008/10/23/homelessness-and-the-charter-victoria-v-adams/
- **Reading 2 - Activity 9: BLM 2 - Bylaws Preventing Homeless from Erecting Shelters Found Unconstitutional** by Laura Track, published in the December 2008 issue of *Bar Talk* of the Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch. The article is also available online at: www.cba.org/BC/bartalk_06_10/12_08/guest_track.aspx
- **Reading 3 – Activity 9: BLM 3 - The Constitutionality of Calgary's Parks and Pathways Bylaws for Homeless Persons** by Jennifer Koshan, Professor of Law, University of Calgary, on ABLawg.ca, the University of Calgary Faculty of Law Blog on Developments in Alberta Law (www.ablawg.ca). The full article is available at: http://ablawg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/blog_jk_victoria_bcsc_nov2008.pdf

Opinion piece opposed to Judge Ross' ruling:

- **Reading 4 – Activity 9: BLM 4 - The Conclusion from Victoria (City) v Adams: Tents and the City** by Roberto Noce, Q.C., Partner with Miller Thomson LLP in Edmonton. The article was published in the *Digest of Municipal & Planning Law*, May 2009. The full article is available at: http://www.millerthomson.com/docs/Victoria_City_v_Adams_Tents_and_the_City_4_DMPL_2d_May_2009_3_by_Robert_Noce_QC.PDF.

U-Shaped Discussion

See **Instructions for a U-Shaped Discussion in Activity 9: BLM 5.**

1. Organize students into pairs or small groups and distribute the readings (Readings 1, 2, 3 and 4) about the case. Note: it is recommended that students read at least one article that supports Judge Ross's ruling (Readings 1, 2, 3) AND the article that opposes Judge Ross's ruling (Reading 4).
2. Working in pairs or small groups, students research the ruling by Judge Carol Ross of the *Victoria (City) v. Adams* case from October 2008, and prepare to defend their position on the following statement in a group U-shaped discussion.

A Victoria City bylaw which required homeless people to remove tents and any overhead protection, while sleeping in a City park, violated their right to life, liberty and security of person (Section 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).

Explain that individual students do not need to have the same opinions as their partner(s). While they do not need to reach consensus, they may change their opinions based on their discussions.

Tell students that they should be prepared to take a stance on the issue and talk about it during a U-shaped discussion with the full class in terms of:

- What I learned from the reading
- What I feel about it (my stance)
- Why I'm standing where I'm standing (on the U)

3. Hold the U-shaped discussion with the full class.

Post-Activity Discussion:

- What did you learn from this activity?
- What was easy? What was difficult?
- Did your opinion change? Why or why not? What do you think now? Should housing be a human right in Canada?

Student Self-Assessment

After the U-shaped discussion, students can do a self-assessment, provided in **Activity 9: BLM 6**

A form for teacher assessment of student performance is provided in **Activity 9: BLM 7**

Follow-Up Activities and Extensions:

- Gather arguments to show how Judge Ross's interpretation of the Charter has a positive effect and/or a negative effect on Canadian individuals and society.
- The Introduction to the case (see <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/Jdb-txt/SC/08/13/2008BCSC1363.htm>) begins with the following statement:

"This litigation arises from what Senior District Judge Atkins in *Pottinger v. City of Miami*, 810 F. Supp. 1551 at 1554 (S.D. Fla. 1992) described as:

...an inevitable conflict between the need of homeless individuals to perform essential, life-sustaining acts in public and the responsibility of the government to maintain orderly, aesthetically pleasing public parks and streets." (From *Introduction*, point [1], p. 4)

What do you think of this statement? How can governments deal with the tension expressed here?

- Kevin Tilley, in his article [Homelessness and the Charter: Victoria v Adams](#) (Activity 9: BLM 1), states: "Regulation of public space must seriously take into account the needs of society's most marginalized citizens."
Do you agree or disagree with Mr. Tilley? Why? What does it mean to regulate public space? In what ways have you seen public space regulated to take into account the needs of homeless people? In what ways have you seen public space regulated that makes life difficult for homeless people? *You see this in practical ways in our cities. For instance, in some cities or neighbourhoods, alcoves that once provided places in which people could sleep have been blocked with gates, thus preventing people from accessing them. Benches at covered bus stops often now have arm rests in the middle of them, preventing people from lying down.*
- Examine the [Victoria \(City\) v Adams](#) case again. Who were the homeless people? (Men, women, Aboriginal, etc). What might this tell you about the homeless population?
- While Canadian domestic law does not include any explicit recognition of the right to adequate housing, Canada has ratified several international human rights instruments (such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)³⁰⁷) that recognize the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. Do you think Canadian domestic law should include explicit recognition of the right to adequate housing? Or is section 7 of the *Charter* enough? Read the 2009 report by United Nations Special Rapporteur, Miloon Kothari, on his mission to Canada: [Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to non-discrimination in this context](#)³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

³⁰⁸ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari, Addendum, Mission to Canada. United Nations, 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.7.Add.3.pdf>

- Research the steps political leaders in Canada are taking or have taken to amend human rights law. How effective have they been? For example:

Libby Davies, NDP Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, introduced [Bill C-559](#),³⁰⁹ An Act to amend the Canadian Rights Act (social condition). “The bill would amend the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)³¹⁰ to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of social condition. In doing so it would protect from discrimination people who are experiencing social or economic disadvantage, such as adequate housing, homelessness, source of income, occupation, level of education, poverty, or any similar circumstance.”³¹¹ The first reading of the Bill was on June 17, 2010.

In April, 2010, Vancouver-Mount Pleasant NDP MLA Jenny Kwan proposed a private member’s bill that “...would amend the BC Human Rights Code to strengthen protections for the homeless. Kwan’s bill, the Protection of the Homeless Act, would amend the [BC Human Rights Code](#)³¹² to include the term ‘social condition’ as prohibited grounds for discrimination...This bill would bring British Columbia in line with other jurisdictions across the country....Quebec, New Brunswick, and the Northwest Territories have included ‘social condition’ in their human rights legislation.”³¹³

- In June, 2009, the City of Victoria appealed Judge Ross’s ruling on the Victoria v Adams case. Do you agree with the appeal? Why or why not? Do you agree that these kinds of decisions should be appealed?

City of Victoria appeals the ruling, June 2009:

- <http://thetyee.ca/News/2009/06/16/VictoriaTentCamping/> “Tent Camping Homeless to Politicians: Face Facts!” By Andrew MacLeod, The Tyee, June 16, 2009

Outcome of the Appeal, December 2009:

- Court of Appeal for British Columbia, Victoria (City) v. Adams, 2009 BCCA 563, December 9, 2009 <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/CA/09/05/2009BCCA0563.htm>
- “BC Homeless Win Right to Camp in Parks” CBC, December 9, 2009 <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/12/09/bc-homeless-camping-ruling.html>
- “Victoria Loses Appeal of Right-to-Shelter Case” by Andrew MacLeod, The Tyee, December 9, 2009 <http://thetyee.ca/Blogs/TheHook/Rights-Justice/2009/12/09/ShelterCase/>
- “City of Victoria Loses Anti-Camping Appeal”, by Chris Johnson, B Channel News Producer, Temporary Autonomous Shelter Collective, December 11, 2009 (this webpage includes links to news articles about the case, starting from 2006, as well as 6 short videos – including two with Constitutional Lawyer, Catherine Boies Parker about winning the case and the rights of homeless people; one with Phillipe Lucas, Victoria City Councillor; and one with Simon Ralph, a defendant in the case) <http://bchannelnews.tv/?p=2540>

- Read these two newspaper articles from August and September 2010:
 - [Victoria’s ‘tent city’ on verge of becoming public health hazard](#), Globe and Mail, Aug 27, 2010
 - [Victoria cracks down on urban campers](#), CBC News, September 1, 2010

Does this information change or confirm your opinion about the case? Why or why not? What would be the best solutions to the problems raised in the article?

³⁰⁹ See www.libbydavies.ca and *Bill C-599*: http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Bills/403/Private/C-559/C-559_1/C-559_1.PDF

³¹⁰ *Canadian Human Rights Act*, http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/H-6/page-2.html#anchorbo-ga:l_1-gb:s_3

³¹¹ From the speech by Libby Davies to the Speaker of the House of Commons in her motion to introduce Bill C-599, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (social condition), www.libbydavies.ca

³¹² *BC Human Rights Code*, http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96210_01

³¹³ *NDP Private Member’s Bill would protect homeless, vulnerable*, BC NDP, April 14, 2010, <http://www.bcnep.ca/newsroom/ndp-private-member%E2%80%99s-bill-would-protect-homeless-vulnerable>

Homelessness and the Charter: Victoria v Adams By Kevin Tilley, October 23, 2008

In a case that is being heralded as a major victory for anti-poverty advocates, and which may potentially redefine s. 7 Charter poverty law jurisprudence, the BC Supreme Court ruled last week that a Victoria municipal by-law prohibiting sleeping in parks runs contrary to the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Victoria (City) v. Adams [2008 BCSC 1363](#) began as a civil injunction against a group of homeless people who had erected a tent city in one of Victoria's urban parks, requiring them to vacate pursuant to a city bylaw making it an offence for anyone to "take up a temporary abode overnight," or "erect or construct, or cause to be erected or constructed, a tent, building or structure, including a temporary structure such as a tent, in a park." Arguing that emergency shelter beds in the city of Victoria were insufficient for the number of homeless, and pointing to the potential health hazards of sleeping outside exposed to the elements, a number of homeless people brought a challenge to the bylaw as contrary to their rights to life, liberty and security of the person.

In a lengthy 112-page judgment, Madame Justice Ross of the BC Supreme Court agreed, striking down the by-laws. The prohibition on seeking shelter in public implicated the life, liberty and security of the person: "The uncontradicted expert evidence establishes that exposure to the elements without adequate shelter, and in particular without overhead protection, can result in a number of serious and life threatening conditions, most notably hypothermia." Because the city's emergency shelters were insufficient to house the entire homeless population, some homeless people were invariably forced to seek public shelter in a way that exposed them to significant health and safety risks.

Justice Ross went on to find that the deprivation to life, liberty and security of the person violated two principles of fundamental justice, namely: they were arbitrary and overbroad. The purposes of the prohibition were to ensure that use of public spaces was open to all members of society, to protect the natural environment from damage, and to address public health and safety concerns. But the specific ban on setting up a tent in a park, failed to target any of these purposes. In short, the total ban on sleeping in parks overshot the legislative mark, running afoul of the constitution.

Of note in the decision is the fact that Justice Ross stopped short of declaring that s.7 mandates a positive duty on the government to provide adequate housing. Citing the majority and dissent decisions in *Gosselin* [2002 SCC 84](#), Justice Ross reiterated that the possibility for s. 7 being expanded to include positive rights had not been foreclosed, but that in the present case, the applicants were not seeking an order that would require such a finding. Instead, she likened the situation to that of *Chaoulli* [2005 SCC 35](#) in which the prohibition on accessing private health care was found to violate the Charter. It was the state's deprivation of a right which was problematic, not the failure to provide it.

Looking past the *prima facie* ruling, though, the case stands for a much bolder proposition, which to date has not received recognition by Appellate courts: that the regulation of public space must seriously take into account the needs of society's most marginalized citizens. Previous similar efforts at defending the rights of squeegee kids, for example, against the inconvenience of the more gentrified public have invariably failed. The issue is increasingly becoming the subject of debate especially in BC where the 2010 Olympics is being criticized for trampling on the rights of the poor. Likewise, courts in Ontario and BC will soon be asked to rule on whether the criminalization of public prostitution runs contrary to ss. 7 and 15 of the *Charter*. The BC Attorney General has already indicated his intention to appeal the Adams decision to the Court of Appeal, so this country may well be in for a dramatic change in how the Charter views the relationship between governments and the poor.

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Bylaws Preventing Homeless from Erecting Shelters Found Unconstitutional

By Laura Track, Lawyer, Pivot Legal LLP, December 2008

On October 14, the B.C. Supreme Court handed down a decision with potential repercussions for the entire country. In *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, Justice Ross struck down Victoria bylaws prohibiting homeless people from erecting temporary shelter on City-owned land. She ruled that the bylaws were arbitrary and overbroad and thus violated Section 7 of the Charter and were not saved by Section 1.

The decision is based on three main findings of fact. First, the number of homeless people living in Victoria vastly exceeds the number of shelter beds. Thus, hundreds of people have no choice but to sleep outside in the City's parks and streets. Second, the effect of the bylaws was to prohibit homeless people from erecting any kind of overhead protection to shelter themselves from the elements, even on a temporary basis. Third, the effect of the prohibition was to impose upon homeless people, who are among the most vulnerable and marginalized of the City's residents, significant and potentially life-threatening health risks such as hypothermia.

Given these realities, Justice Ross found that by denying access to shelter, a basic necessity of life, the City violated homeless people's right to life, liberty and security of the person, in a manner not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

There have been predictable accusations of judicial activism and legislating from the bench, but in fact the judgment was remarkably narrow. Justice Ross noted that the City enacted the bylaws for legitimate purposes: protecting parks' natural environment, ensuring parks are available for everyone to enjoy, and because of public health concerns. However, the City was unable to show how prohibiting people from sheltering themselves at night would achieve those aims. Recognizing that policy makers are entitled to deference in the policy choices they make regarding complex issues such as homelessness, Justice Ross emphasized that, nevertheless, it is the responsibility of government in making those decisions to act in conformity with the Constitution.

Accusations that the judgment will result in the unbridled expansion of tent cities throughout the city are also misguided. The judgment does not suggest that all laws should be suspended with respect to homeless people in parks, nor that there can be no regulation of when, where, and how homeless people may shelter themselves. In response to the court's decision, the City of Victoria passed a new bylaw restricting the hours when tents could be erected to between 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Unfortunately, those hours were decided without any consultation with the homeless people sure to be affected, and the Victoria police's efforts to enforce the new bylaws resulted in several arrests just days after the court's decision.

The City of Vancouver says it will continue to enforce its own bylaws prohibiting homeless people from sheltering themselves on public property, despite the Victoria ruling. This despite the fact that Vancouver has fewer than 800 shelter beds and more than 1500 homeless people, according to a homeless count conducted in March 2008. In the last nine months of 2007, Vancouver shelters turned away homeless individuals seeking a place to stay for the night 36,000 times because the shelter was full.

The City of Victoria plans to appeal the court's decision.

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The Constitutionality of Calgary's Parks and Pathways Bylaw for Homeless Persons

By Jennifer Koshan, B.Sc., LL.B., LL.M. Cases Considered: *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, 2008 BCSC 1363

The recent decision of the B.C. Supreme Court finding municipal bylaws unconstitutional for prohibiting certain practices associated with homelessness in parks has received a great deal of media attention in Alberta and nationally. In *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, Justice Carol Ross considered bylaws in the City of Victoria that prohibit persons from “tak[ing] up temporary abode over night” and erecting or constructing “a tent, building, or structure, including a temporary structure” in city parks (*Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059*, ss. 14(d) and 16(1)). Justice Ross found that these provisions violated the rights of homeless persons to life, liberty and security of the person under section 7 of the *Charter*, and that the violation was not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice or a reasonable limit under section 1 of the *Charter*....

The history of the *Adams* litigation is complex, and will not be addressed here. It is sufficient to note that Justice Ross’s decision concerned an application by homeless persons in Victoria to have the bylaw declared unconstitutional. Her decision turned on several important findings of fact. First, she found that there are over 1000 homeless persons living in Victoria, but there are only 141 shelter beds available most times of the year (increasing to 326 beds in extreme conditions (at para. 4)). Although there was evidence that a small number of homeless persons choose not to utilize shelters, Justice Ross concluded that “a significant number of people in the City of Victoria have no choice but to sleep outside” (at paras. 5, 58). Further evidence showed the demographic realities of homelessness: at least 40% of Victoria’s homeless are mentally ill, at least 50% have substance abuse problems, and 25% struggle with both (at para. 44). A disproportionate number of Victoria’s homeless are Aboriginal, particularly homeless youth (at para. 61). While a majority of homeless persons are male, women were more likely to be homeless because of domestic violence (at para. 60). Justice Ross also accepted expert evidence which showed that the kind of overhead protection banned by the bylaw was necessary to protect people sleeping outside from the elements, and that without such protection they faced significant risks to life and health, including hypothermia, skin and respiratory infections (at para. 67).

Justice Ross then turned to an examination of section 7 of the *Charter*. She noted that in order to prove a violation of section 7, the claimants must show (1) a deprivation of the right to life, liberty or security of the person, and (2) that the deprivation violated the principles of fundamental justice (at para. 76). She cited a range of international human rights instruments and reports providing for the right to adequate housing (see e.g. the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, GA Res. 217(III), U.N. GAOR, (3d Sess., Supp. No. 13, U.N. Doc. A/810 (1948) 71, Article 25(1); the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, 16 December 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 3, Can. T.S. 1976 No. 46, 6 I.L.M. 360, Article 11.1), and noted that these instruments could be used as an aid to interpreting the scope of section 7 of the *Charter*, relying on a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions to this effect (see e.g. *Baker v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, [1999] 2 S.C.R. 817; *United States v. Burns*, [2001] 1 S.C.R. 283). In the end, however, not much use was made of these international instruments in light of the fact that this was a case involving government action as opposed to inaction. There was no need, therefore, to explore whether section 7 of the *Charter* imposes a positive obligation on the state to provide adequate housing, since the alleged violation in this case was the City’s prohibition of certain activities and the impact of those prohibitions and their associated penalties on homeless persons in Victoria. The government’s argument (at para. 81) that “the Bylaws do not cause the Defendants to be homeless; hence, the condition in which they find themselves is not the result of state action” was accordingly rejected.

Justice Ross also rejected the government’s contention that what was being asserted here were property rights, which are not protected under section 7 of the *Charter*. She held that “the use of park space by an

individual does not necessarily involve a deprivation of another person's ability to utilize the same "resource" (at para. 130). Further, "[p]ublic properties are held for the benefit of the public, which includes the homeless. The government cannot prohibit certain activities on public property based on its ownership of that property if doing so involves a deprivation of the fundamental human right not to be deprived of the ability to protect one's own bodily integrity" (at para. 131).

Deprivation of bodily or psychological integrity is the very definition of security of the person under section 7 of the Charter (see e.g. *R. v. Morgentaler*, [1988] 1 S.C.R. 30; *Rodriguez v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, [1993] 3 S.C.R. 519). Justice Ross found that the bylaws violated not only security of the person, but also the right to life itself by exposing homeless persons to the risk of serious health problems and death. Put another way, "the homeless person is left to choose between a breach of the Bylaws in order to obtain adequate shelter or inadequate shelter exposing him or her to increased risks to significant health problems or even death" (at para. 153). The first requirement under section 7 of the *Charter* was thus made out.

Turning to the principles of fundamental justice, Justice Ross noted that laws which are overbroad or arbitrary will not comport with these principles (citing *R. v. Heywood*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 761; *R. v. Marmo-Levine*; *R. v. Caine*, [2003] 3 S.C.R. 71; *Chaoulli v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, [2005] 1 S.C.R. 791; and *Rodriguez*, supra). She examined the rationale offered for the bylaws, which included protecting parks from damage or harm, ensuring that parks are available for public use and enjoyment, and public health considerations (at para. 172). Justice Ross found that these rationale were not furthered by the bylaws in question, as "[t]here is no evidence and no reason to believe that any of the damage described would be increased if homeless people were allowed to cover themselves with cardboard boxes or other forms of overhead protection while they slept" (at para. 193). Concerns about litter and drug paraphernalia were also seen to be unconnected to the ban on temporary shelters. The bylaws were thus held to be arbitrary. Further, "there are any number of less restrictive alternatives that would further the City's concerns; for example, requiring the overhead protection to be taken down every morning, and creating certain zones in sensitive park regions where sleeping was not permitted" (at para. 185). The bylaws were thus held to be overbroad.

Having found a violation of the principles of fundamental justice, Justice Ross noted that only in rare or extraordinary circumstances would such a violation be justified as a reasonable limit under section 1 of the *Charter*. While finding that preservation of parks was a sufficiently important objective, the earlier findings of overbreadth and arbitrariness meant that the bylaws were not minimally impairing of the rights of homeless persons, as required by *R. v. Oakes*, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103.

Overall, then, Justice Ross found a violation of section 7 of the *Charter* that could not be justified by the City. She granted a declaration "that the Bylaws are of no force and effect insofar as they apply to prevent homeless people from erecting temporary shelter" (at para. 237), and declined to suspend this remedy, giving it immediate effect....

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Update by the author, May 2010: In June 2009, the City of Victoria appealed the BCSC decision. In December 2009, the BCSC decision was upheld by the BC Court of Appeal in *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, 2009 BCCA 563.

Victoria (City) V. Adams: Tents and the City

By Roberto Noce, Q.C., published in the *Digest of Municipal & Planning Law*, May 2009

The following is an excerpt from the full article, which is available at:

http://www.millerthomson.com/docs/Victoria_City_v_Adams_Tents_and_the_City_4_DMPL_2d_May_2009_3_by_Robert_Noce_QC.PDF

III. Conclusion

Following the *Adams* decision, the City of Victoria amended its Parks Regulation Bylaw to prohibit camping between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., which was consistent with the comments of Ross J. in *Adams*. Had this specification been in place earlier, perhaps *Adams* would have seen a different outcome.

The City of Victoria has appealed the decision of Ross J. The appeal will be heard some time in June 2009. In essence, the City of Victoria will be arguing that Ross J.'s decision represented judicial intrusion upon the policy-making powers of municipalities. With respect, I agree with the position taken by the City of Victoria. However, I would go one step further and state that not only does Ross J.'s decision intrude upon the policy-making powers of municipalities, but the decision completely disregards the issue of safety for the greater public, i.e. the non-homeless users of city parks.

Although Ross J. was diligent in her analysis of the law and its potential impact on members of the homeless population, she failed to adequately consider the impact that her ruling would have on other non-homeless members of the tax-paying public who wish to continue to use the city parks in a peaceable manner. In other words, her analysis with respect to s.1 of the *Charter* was flawed, in that she essentially dismissed the aim of the Bylaws relating to the safety and security of the public at large. The danger created by Ross J.'s determination that the Bylaws are unconstitutional is that now there is a very real possibility that groups of homeless people will continue to congregate in various City of Victoria parks and set up semi-disposable ghettos, for want of a better term.

Ross J. also discussed the fundamental human right not to be deprived of the ability to protect one's own bodily integrity, but again she only gave real consideration to the rights of homeless people in her balancing exercise. What about the non-homeless, tax-paying public who want to safely and peaceably enjoy city parks? The evidence presented in *Adams* was that groups of up to 70 homeless people were setting up temporary shelters in city parks. It would be very intimidating for a person to walk through a park and be faced with large groups of homeless people popping in and out of their tents, perhaps interacting aggressively with them. Surely, this should have factored into Ross J.'s analysis of protection of bodily integrity. In other words, the bodily integrity of non-homeless users of city parks is also at stake.

Although Ross J. did give some consideration to the issues of additional litter and drug paraphernalia that a "tent city" had the potential to create, she failed to consider the major safety risks posed to other non-homeless park users. For example, a "tent city" creates a danger to members of the public who wish to enjoy the city parks in the usual ways, such as strolling or jogging through, playing Frisbee, or having a family picnic. City planners design parks with safety and security in mind, which includes maintaining visible sight lines across key areas. If homeless people are permitted to erect cardboard shelters and tents, particularly if they are grouped together in certain areas, this will obstruct sight lines and impede security within city parks.

With respect to activities carried out in city parks, a homeless person who is covering him or herself with a blanket for the night will behave very differently than someone who has the additional cover afforded by a cardboard shelter or tent. It would be uncomfortable for passers-by, and in fact ruin their enjoyment of the park, if homeless people inside their makeshift shelters were engaged in noisy sexual activity. Furthermore, the privacy afforded by tents and shelters increases the likelihood that the litter left behind in the morning will be bio-hazardous, such as used condoms and needles. This type of waste left behind creates the risk of infection to other park users. All of this will interfere with the public's use and enjoyment of city parks, as well as the protection of their own bodily integrity.

Although laudable in theory, the City of Victoria's amended Parks Regulation Bylaw that allows homeless people to erect tents and other temporary shelters in city parks from 8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. will be difficult to enforce. Given the daylight Victoria enjoys until nearly 10:00 p.m. on summer nights, there are bound to be members of the public who no longer feel safe enjoying city parks, either alone or with their families, once the homeless population has begun to set up their temporary shelters. Furthermore, early morning joggers will be prevented from safely enjoying city parks, as they may encounter homeless people waking up and starting to emerge from their shelters, annoyed that the joggers have woken them up. Moreover, the joggers may find themselves in the position of having to call bylaw services every morning to alert them to the fact that there are still cardboard shelters and tents set up throughout the parks well after 7:00 a.m.

The Court's declaration that the Bylaws were unconstitutional creates more social harm than good, and places additional financial burdens on a municipality, such as policing, bylaw enforcement and demands on civic departments to clean the parks on a regular basis. Ross J. clearly empathized with members of the homeless population, but she failed to empathize with members of the non-homeless public, whose municipal tax contributions help pay for the upkeep of city parks, and who are entitled to peaceably use and enjoy the city parks. Ross J.'s decision has opened the door to the establishment of semi-disposable ghettos, and has closed the door on enjoyment of city parks by families and individuals who would put themselves at risk by engaging in normal outdoor activities in the midst of these ghettos.

Roberto Noce, Q.C. is a partner with Miller Thomson LLP in Edmonton. His practice includes municipal law, real estate development, condominium and corporate/commercial matters. Mr. Noce currently acts for a number of municipalities, developers and condominium corporations throughout Alberta. He is the Chair of the Municipal Law Section (North) of the Canadian Bar Association (Alberta Branch). Mr. Noce is also a former Edmonton City Councillor (1995 – 2001) and has been a member of numerous boards and associations with the City of Edmonton and related bodies. This article reflects the views of the author only.

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http://www.millerthomson.com/docs/Victoria_City_v_Adams_Tents_and_the_City_4_DMPL_2d_May_2009_3_by_Robert_Noce_QC.PDF

Activity 9: BLM 5

Instructions for a U-Shaped Discussion

The *U-shaped Discussion* strategy offers an alternative to the traditional two-sided debate. Instead of an adversarial debating format, this strategy encourages students to see the merits of all sides and to recast binary options as positions along a continuum. The goal is to encourage students to endorse positions provisionally while listening to others in an attempt to figure out the most defensible personal stance along a continuum of possibilities. Stress that students are not to try to convince others, but merely to explain why the position they are sitting in is the most defensible one for them. There is no need to reach consensus on the issue.

To use this approach:

- Arrange the class in a U-shape.
- Ask students with polar views (i.e., either strongly agreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposition) to seat themselves at either tip of the U; ask students with mixed opinions to sit at appropriate spots along the rounded part.
- Ask students at each tip of the U to state their position and offer a few reasons only (if there is an imbalance in strong support for one side or the other, locate yourself temporarily in a polar position to get the discussion going).
- Alternate from side to side, as students from all parts of the U offer their views.
- Encourage students to physically move along the spectrum if they have heard reasons that cause them to want to shift their intellectual position on the issue.

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An alternative to the U-Shaped Discussion: Discussion Carousel

The *Discussion Carousel* can be used as an alternative to the *U-Shaped Discussion*, or before the *U-Shaped Discussion* to help students clarify their views and practice speaking to one person at a time before speaking before the whole class.

Have students move their chairs so that they make two concentric circles of an equal number of chairs, with each chair on the inner circle facing a chair on the outer circle. Students sit in chairs so that they are facing each other in pairs (one on the outer and one on the inner circle). A large diagram can help.

- Give everyone a minute to consider in silence their views on the topic of discussion.
- Next, give the inner circle students one minute to tell the student sitting opposite what they think. The outer circle students must listen and not speak.
- Then give the outer circle students one minute to tell student sitting opposite what they think. The inner circle students must listen and not speak.
- Instruct all students to move one chair to the right (the inner circle will move in a clockwise direction and the outer circle will move in an anti-clockwise direction).
- Now ask the inner circle to explain their previous partner's views in 30 seconds. The outer circle listens.
- Now ask the outer circle to explain their previous partner's views while the inner circle listens.
- Next the inner circle students can express their own views for one minute; then the outer circle can.
- Students can continue moving one chair to the right until they have spoken with all the students opposite them. As they move, they can explain previous partners' views or simply give their own views, which may alter as they learn from their partners.
- In a class discussion, have students share what they learned and if and how their views changed.

Activity 9: BLM 6 - Student Self-Assessment

Name: _____

	Exemplary	Good	Satisfactory	Developing	Unsatisfactory
<p>Background knowledge - accurate use of relevant facts)</p>	I am able to refer to many relevant facts, always with accuracy	I am able to refer to relevant facts, usually with accuracy	I am able to refer to relevant facts, sometimes with accuracy	I am able to refer to a limited number of relevant facts with little accuracy	I am able to refer to few or no relevant and accurate facts
<p>Open-mindedness - open to consider a variety of views - willing to re-think position based on new evidence or arguments</p>	<p>I always carefully consider all viewpoints presented</p> <p>I am always willing to reconsider my position when evidence or arguments warrant</p>	<p>I usually consider most viewpoints presented</p> <p>I am usually willing to reconsider my position when evidence or arguments warrant</p>	<p>I sometimes consider a variety of viewpoints presented</p> <p>I am sometimes willing to reconsider my position when evidence or arguments warrant</p>	<p>I seldom consider other viewpoints</p> <p>I am rarely willing to reconsider my position when evidence or arguments warrant</p>	<p>I rarely or never consider other viewpoints</p> <p>I am always reluctant to reconsider my position when evidence or arguments warrant</p>
<p>Reasoned Judgment - uses evidence to reach an informed decision - considers criteria when making a decision</p>	<p>My decisions are always based on available evidence</p> <p>I always consider the range of criteria when arriving at a decision</p>	<p>My decisions are usually based on available evidence</p> <p>I usually consider most of the criteria when arriving at a decision</p>	<p>My decisions are sometimes based on available evidence</p> <p>I sometimes consider criteria when arriving at a decision</p>	<p>My decisions are seldom based on available evidence</p> <p>I seldom consider criteria when arriving at a decision</p>	<p>My decisions are rarely based on available evidence</p> <p>I rarely or never consider criteria when arriving at a decision</p>

Comments:

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Activity 9: BLM 7 - U-Shaped Discussion Teacher Assessment

Use the following scale to score student performances: 4 = Exemplary 3 = Good 2 = Satisfactory 1 = Developing N/A = No Evidence

Student Names	Background Knowledge - accurate use of relevant facts	Open-mindedness - open to consider a variety of views - willing to rethink view and position based on new evidence or arguments	Reasoned Judgment - uses evidence to reach an informed decision - considers criteria when making a Decision
	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:
	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:
	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:
	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:
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	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:
	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:	4 3 2 1 N/A Comment:

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ACTIVITY 10: 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

Materials:

- Order in advance: the DVD *The Purpose of Life is Rice ... Wink* by Sterling Pache and Danse Crowkiller. Teachers can order the film at no cost by emailing Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film. Teachers can also purchase the film directly from Danse who can generally be found outside the East End Food Co-op at 1034 Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Danse has been provided with films to sell to supplement his income.
- Optional: copies of the poem, *The Cold Within* by James Patrick Kinney (**Activity 10: BLM 1**)

Film Description:

The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink (Vancouver) (2009) (30 min) (Sterling Pache and Danse Crowkiller)

A character documentary shot in the first-person by Danse Crowkiller during the time he lived on the street at the corner of Commercial Drive and Kitchener Street in Vancouver. The film intimately explores Danse's day-to-day life, his art, his ideas, his involvement in the community, his friends, his contributions and his adventures. The documentary, shot in the first person, presents the opportunity to share Danse's unique spirit and his identity beyond his homelessness. It's an exciting look into the unconventional and beautiful life of an individual who gives more than he takes and is loved by his community. View the trailer:

www.romanticchildstudios.com/blog/2009/02/the-purpose-of-life-is-rice-wink/.

Preparation:

Preview the film before showing it to your students. It contains occasional coarse language and references to violence and abuse. Review information on Aboriginal Homelessness in the Teacher Backgrounder, in particular, pages 17, 18, 32, 34-40, 42, and 45.

Activities:

1. Pre-viewing Discussion: Pose the following questions. Key discussion points are presented in italics. These are important to emphasize if they do not emerge in the discussion.
 - What is the best way to really know what someone else's experience is? *Enter into a dialogue, read about them if available*
 - In Canada, there are groups of people whose experience we know little about. Homeless people are such a group and so are Aboriginal people. What do you know about Aboriginal people who are homeless?
 - What are some of the ways we could learn about their experiences and perspectives? *Enter into a dialogue, read books, read government reports or view a documentary*
 - All of these methods have their limitations because of bias. What is bias? *In the dictionary, bias is defined as the "Inclination or preference that influences (but ought not to) one's judgment from being balanced or even-handed."*³¹⁴ *Different people can have different biases or view points on the same issue. Documentary films also typically have a particular bias, or dominant perspective or point of view,*

³¹⁴ From The Business Dictionary: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/bias.html>

which can lead the viewer to come to a particular conclusion. But usually there is more than one perspective on any particular issue. Often only one is shown in a film where the filmmaker wants to relay a particular message.

- Instruct students to look for the main message or bias in the film as they watch it.
2. View the DVD: Learn more about the life and culture of Danse Crowkiller by viewing the documentary *The Purpose of Life is Rice ... Wink*. It was created to present the perspective of an Aboriginal homeless man, Danse Crowkiller.
3. Post-Viewing Discussion: After viewing the DVD, have the students consider the following questions:
- What did you learn from the film? What surprised you? How did it make you feel?
 - What is the significance of the history that Danse recounts regarding the school he attended (Christie Residential School, District 32)? *The Indian Residential School system operated in Canada for over 100 years, with the first school opening in the 1830s, and the last one closing in 1996. Christie Residential School near Tofino on Vancouver Island closed in 1983. The schools were intended to prepare Aboriginal youth for employment in a range of trades and vocations. They were institutions where the overwhelming experience for those who attended them was abusive. The education that some were able to gain did not counter the psychological and physical harm that resulted. The following website will provide an introduction to how the federal government, responsible for establishing the system, is responding to the legacy of the Indian residential school system: <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/rqpi/index-eng.asp>*
See the following website to learn more about the history of the Indian residential school system: <http://www.wherethechildren.ca/>
 - What was Danse's childhood like? *He experienced a lot of abuse*
 - What are the most challenging aspects of Danse's life? *The threat of violence and theft from others on the street, having to take everything with him wherever he goes*
 - Why do you think Danse refers to passersby as "brother"? *To communicate the philosophy that many Aboriginal people espouse that "we are all related"*
 - What do you think Danse means by "the root of separation is one's own judgement"? *When you judge others you are separating from them*
 - How does this philosophy apply to your life? Describe other aspects of Danse's philosophy.
 - What did you notice, or what surprised you most, about Danse's spiritual life? *He prays all the time and he gives offerings of tobacco to Mother Earth and Creator*
 - How does Danse describe what he needs?
 - What is Danse's logic regarding time? *He likes to note the time in relation to 9/11*
 - What communication or theatrical techniques does Danse use that are particularly effective? *The asides to the camera, indicated by his hand up to the side of his mouth*
 - What actions were taken to help the viewer get to know Danse's situation and life experience? How was this different from other documentary films you have seen? *Sterling Pache, the other filmmaker, gave his camera to Danse so that Danse filmed and represented himself, rather than an outside filmmaker filming, portraying and representing Danse.*
 - How does Danse describe the focus of the documentary? *"How I see things"*
 - What is the bias portrayed in the film? Do you agree with it? Why or why not? What is the perspective of homelessness that is portrayed in this film? *That homelessness is a problem that is rooted in the way in which society is structured, rather than in the individual alone. With respect to Aboriginal homeless people, homelessness is rooted in the colonial policies and practices of the dominant culture. Colonialism in Canada is the set of dominating and oppressive relationships that, over time and through policies, subordinated Aboriginal peoples to and marginalized them from the newcomer settler society economically, socially, culturally and politically. In particular, Canadian colonial policies separated*

Aboriginal peoples from their land, homes, communities and each other. The poverty and homelessness experienced by many Aboriginal people in Canada and BC are just two of the effects of past and recent policies and actions.

- In Metro Vancouver, people of Aboriginal origin represent about 2% of the region's census population but 32% of the region's homeless population³¹⁵. Does this surprise you? Why or why not? Why do you think Aboriginal people are so over-represented in homelessness?
- What has changed in your thinking about people who are homeless? *Encourage students to express something they learned about Aboriginal homelessness if they don't bring it up.*

Follow-up activity:

- What actions could you as a citizen take to address the situation for homeless Aboriginal people in Vancouver, in BC and in Canada? What more do you need to know? Develop a research plan.

Other follow-up suggestions:

- Have the students invite a friend or family member to have a discussion over coffee or a meal. Explain to them the perspectives on homelessness that were gained from watching the documentary. Hold a class discussion regarding the most challenging aspects for the friend or family member to understand.
- Provide students with copies of the poem that Danse recites (**Activity 10: BLM 1**). Why do you think that Danse chose this particular poem to recite? *That we should act on what is good for all regardless of the groups individuals belong to*
- Write a poem for Danse that shows what you have learned from viewing the documentary.
- Create an art piece that shows you know what it is like to be in Danse's situation.
- Write a letter to Danse expressing what you have learned from viewing the program.
- Write a letter to a local newspaper presenting your perspective on how to address homelessness for Aboriginal people in your community. For example, Megaphone Magazine (www.megaphonemagazine.com), Vancouver's street paper, will accept submissions from students. For information, contact: editor@megaphonemagazine.com
- Find out more about Aboriginal or Indigenous spiritual traditions. How are they connected to the land? (The novel "Keeper 'n Me" by Richard Wagamese is an excellent resource for learning more about Anishnabe spiritual traditions.) *Indigenous peoples have diverse spiritual traditions, for example the Coast Salish practice different traditions than the Dakota. The natural world is an important feature of Indigenous spiritual traditions. Indigenous art work often reflects spiritual traditions.*
- Invite a guest speaker to provide more knowledge about Indigenous spiritual traditions. Visit a museum and art gallery to see how Indigenous artists express spiritual traditions.
- Photocopy "Aboriginal Homelessness," pages 34-40 of the Teacher Backgrounder for students to read.

³¹⁵ *Still on Our Streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* Commissioned by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/ResourcesPage/HomelessCountReport2008Feb12.pdf

Extension Activity:

Students will:

- Compare the perspectives on homelessness in two documentaries, *The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink* and *Devil Plays Hardball* by CBC Learning in which Danse plays a role. To order, see p. 148.

Activity:

1. Pre-Viewing Discussion: Pose the following questions:
 - What is bias? *Bias is the way that authors, artists or creators present information so that the viewer/reader will come to a particular conclusion.* (Also see p. 121-122). Give an example of bias.
2. View the DVD *Devil Plays Hardball*.
 - Try to identify the bias of the documentary film maker. Have students use **Activity 10: BLM 2** for identifying bias while they are viewing the program. Examples are provided in **Activity 10: BLM 3**.
3. Post-Viewing Discussion: Pose the following questions:
 - What is the perspective that the film maker takes? *That homelessness is a problem that is rooted in the individual and not the way that society is structured. That the problem of homelessness can be solved when the homeless acquire the same problem solving skills and know-how that others may have.*
 - What are some of the examples of bias that you observed in the film?
 - How is Danse portrayed in each film?
 - Which program – *Devil Plays Hardball* or *The Purpose of Rice is Life...Wink* – do you think gives a more realistic or ‘true’ perspective on homelessness? Why?

Follow-up Activity:

Organize a class debate. See “Guidelines for a Debate” on **Activity 10: BLM 4**.

1. Have each team prepare to defend their position on the following statement: *Homelessness can be solved when the homeless are given the opportunity to develop the right skills, knowledge and attitudes.*
2. Have the debate team members practice their arguments with their friends and family.
3. Hold the debate in class.
4. As an alternative to a debate, hold a U-Shaped Discussion or a Discussion Carousel (See **Activity 9: BLM 5**).

Related Film Resources:

Finding Dawn – (Vancouver and other locations) (2006) (73 min) (Christine Welsh) (NFB)

Dawn Crey. Ramona Wilson. Daleen Kay Bosse. These are just three of the estimated 500 Aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in Canada over the past thirty years. Directed by acclaimed Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh, *Finding Dawn* is a compelling documentary that puts a human face to this national tragedy. This is an epic journey into the dark heart of Native women's experience in Canada. From Vancouver's skid row, where more than 60 women are missing, we travel to the "Highway of Tears" in northern British Columbia, and onward to Saskatoon, where the murders and disappearances of Native women remain unresolved. Along the road to honour those who have passed, we uncover reason for hope. It lives in Native rights activists Professor Janice Acoose and Fay Blaney. It drives events such as the annual Women's Memorial March in Vancouver and inspires communities all along the length of Highway 16 to come together to demand change. *Finding Dawn* illustrates the deep historical, social and economic factors that contribute to the epidemic of violence against Native women in this country. It goes further to present the ultimate message that stopping the violence is everyone's responsibility.

View the film online at: National Film Board of Canada http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn

Website: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=52581>

Teachers' guide on *Finding Dawn*: <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100567.pdf>

Metamorphosis: An In-Depth Look at the Life of Former Street Kids (Vancouver) (2005) (Jennifer Mervyn)

This documentary features four BC youth, two of whom are aboriginal, who tell their stories about life on the streets and what they had to do to leave that life behind them. Politicians, police, and front-line workers are interviewed for their input in what helps facilitate exits from homelessness for young people. Concerns raised in the film include lack of available treatment for youth struggling with substance abuse, the need for treatment on demand, the deficits in the "4 Pillars Approach", and the challenges of the Young Offenders Act. The film takes a critical look at the resilience factors in youth leaving the street, and examines the process of transition that successful youth have made. Powerful and thought-provoking, *Metamorphosis* raises important questions about the changes we need to make to help future youth successfully transition off the street.

Contact: email Jennifer Mervyn at jennifermervyn@hotmail.com

Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn - (Vancouver) (2008) (35 min) (Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve) This persuasive and honest documentary explores the homeless epidemic in metro Vancouver by putting a face to homelessness and giving a voice to the homeless and those who work with them. It is a film filled with hope. Find out how you can make a difference.

This film is used in Activity 3A (p. 55) and raises issues of Aboriginal homelessness.

To order: Teachers can order the film at no cost by emailing Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film.

Activity 10: BLM 1

THE COLD WITHIN³¹⁶
By James Patrick Kinney³¹⁷

Six humans trapped by happenstance
In dark and bitter cold
Each one possessed a stick of wood,
Or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs,
The first woman held hers back.
For on the faces around the fire,
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking cross the way,
Saw one not of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes,
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use,
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store.
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy, shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from sight,
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

The last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

The logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They didn't die from the cold without,
They died from ---THE COLD WITHIN.

³¹⁶ The poem is available at: <http://www.all-creatures.org/poetry/coldwithin.html>

³¹⁷ There is some discrepancy as to the authorship of this poem, but it is believed it was written by James Patrick Kinney in the 1960s in the USA.

Provide examples of bias in the film. Briefly describe the scene, the language that is used (e.g. what an individual or the narrator says), and whose perspective this is and the bias that is portrayed.

Scene	Language	Perspective / Bias
Opening scene narration	"We're all sick and tired of stepping over bodies."	Is speaking for the viewing audience, those who watch news on TV. Is not including the homeless in "we". The homeless are seen as different and separated from "us". The homeless are considered to be 'in the way'.

Activity 10: BLM 3

Teacher Answer Key
Identifying Bias in *Devil Plays Hardball*
Some Suggested Responses

Scene	Language	Perspective/Bias
<i>Opening scene narration</i>	<i>“We’re all sick and tired of stepping over bodies.”</i>	<i>Is speaking for the viewing audience, those who watch news on TV. Is not including the homeless in “we”. The homeless are seen as different and separated from “us”. The homeless are considered to be ‘in the way’.</i>
<i>Introduction of the subject matter narration</i> <i>Echoed by “mentor” Susan Evans</i>	<i>“What can individuals do?”</i> <i>“One by one we can make a difference.”</i>	<i>Ignores what might be accomplished by groups working together in solidarity, homeless and others. Implies that the homeless simply need some skills and knowledge that can be provided by the mentors and that they themselves are not doing enough as individuals.</i>
<i>Narration of meeting between Susan Evans, mentor and the young couple Adrian and Amanda</i>	<i>“With Christmas only a week away the ‘give and take’ comes easily.”</i>	<i>The phrase ‘give and take’ implies a relationship of equitable power. This mentee/mentor relationship is not equitable. Susan has money and privilege, the young couple has very little.</i>

To Begin

You may wish to have students brainstorm some of the rules that must be followed for an effective and respectful debate before sharing the following rules with them.

Rules for Democratic Debate

- Listen and speak with respect
- Bolster your case with information from legitimate sources
- Argue against the points being made, not with the person making them
- Honour the decisions of the moderator
- Observers make no judgements until they hear both sides

Preparation

Divide students into teams or groups (minimum number of four to a group, but you may want larger groups to limit the number of debates). Have students count off “one, two” to decide who is “pro” (agrees with the statement) and who is “con” (disagrees with the statement).

Give students sufficient time to research their positions. Remind them that it is very important that the sources they use are credible, and that any information taken from a source must be given credit in a bibliography or “Sources Cited” list. Increasingly, the information we use is obtained from the Internet. Below is a short list that you can present to your students to assess bias and credibility in web resources.

Web Page Assessment

- Is there an author on the page?
- Are the author’s credentials/experience stated? What are the author’s credentials?
- Can you contact the webmaster?
- Who sponsors the page? (What organization/company?)
- Are there links to information about the sponsor?
- On which date was the page last updated? Is the information current?
- Does the information appear to be biased? Is the information meant to sway opinions?
- Does the information appear to be reliable and error-free? Does it conflict with information elsewhere?
- Is there advertising on the page? Does the information seem to support a product or gimmick?

Discuss the expectations for the assignment with the students before they begin their work. You might want to include criteria such as:

- *Knowledge*: Understanding of the topic, accuracy and thoroughness of information, research skills
- *Thinking*: Critical thinking skills, effectiveness of rebuttal
- *Communication*: Presentation style, respect for opposition team, organization of arguments
- *Application*: Incorporates previous knowledge, extends to real-life examples

The Debate Process

Each group will debate in front of the class for a specific length of time, perhaps 10 minutes. Choose a timekeeper and a moderator to ensure the debate process is followed fairly. Use the following process:

Pro side	One student states his or her side's case for agreement with the statement and argues their position for 2 minutes. Everyone else is silent. The con side listens attentively and takes notes.
Con side	One student states why his or her side disagrees with the statement and argues their position for 2 minutes. Everyone else is silent. The pro side listens attentively and takes notes.
Break	Both sides have 2 minutes to plan their rebuttals. Observers make notes on arguments made and how they would argue if they were debating.
Con side	One student has 1 minute to rebut the arguments made by the pro side.
Pro side	One student has 1 minute to rebut the arguments made by the con side.
Final arguments	One student from each side has 1 minute to convince observers why they have a better case.

Closing

After final arguments, observers may be given a chance to add their thoughts to the discussion. If desired, the class may then vote on the issue: pro or con.

Adapted with permission from: *Working for Change: Active Global Citizenship* by World Vision Canada, Education and Public Engagement, www.worldvision.ca/resources

ACTIVITY 11: IS THERE ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE? DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

Students will:

- Realize that when resources are not distributed equitably or equally, some people do not get a fair share and do not benefit equally
- Define ‘equitable redistribution of resources’

Materials:

- An equal number of a simple item as there are students in your classroom. For example, apples, cookies, crackers, pencils, erasers – enough for one per student. (Food/snack items, if available, work well for this activity, but be aware of food allergies and sensitivities your students may have).

This activity aims to simulate what happens when resources are not distributed equitably or equally in society by providing students with unequal portions of an item – a few students will receive a lot of the items, and the majority of students will receive very few, thus creating a situation that is unfair. For some students, this situation may feel very real and familiar to them – they and their families may live in poverty and may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. Teachers are encouraged to be aware of their students’ situations, and approach the activity with sensitivity. The ultimate goal and potential value of the activity is to help all students understand the bigger picture and how they fit into it. Teachers are also encouraged to follow up this activity with Activity 12, where students learn about government policy tools to end homelessness, and, in particular, Activity 13, where students have the opportunity to do something proactive.

ACTIVITY 11, PART 1: Is There Enough for Everyone?

1. Divide the class into two groups by drawing numbers or straws so that three-quarters of the class is in one group, and one-quarter is in the other.
2. Divide the items into four equal portions. Give three-fourths of the items to the smaller group of students, and the remaining fourth to the larger group.
3. Before students do anything with the items, discuss with them how they are feeling. What seems to be the problem? Too few items or something else?
4. If the groups spontaneously decide to trade items and work out deals to redistribute them, let them do this, but do not suggest this to them in advance.

Discussion:

- How did you feel doing this activity? Why?
- What words describe the situation that was created at the beginning? Why?
- Did you think it was fair? Why or why not? Were some people just lucky or unlucky? How so?
- How might this type of unequal/inequitable distribution affect people in the long run?
- Does this really happen in our society?
- Did you try to do anything to balance the situation? If so, what did you do? *Students may have shared and redistributed the items so everyone had a fair- or equitable-sized portion, or an equal-sized portion. If they didn’t share, ask them how they could have worked together to make the situation fairer. This is called **redistribution**.*
- Did the portions have to be equal to be fair? *Explain the difference between **equal** and **equitable**: equal means the portions are the same; equitable means the portions are fair, but not necessarily equal, or the same. In simple terms, equality means sameness; equity means fairness. Sometimes we*

Adapted with permission of World Vision Canada from: “Is There Enough for Everyone?” in *GEAR: Global Education Activity Resource*, p. 73, by World Vision Canada, Education and Public Engagement: www.worldvision.ca/resources

need to be equitable (fair – but not necessarily the same for everyone) in order to achieve equality. In other words, some people, depending on their situation and needs, might be given a greater amount of a resource than others are given. For example, in Canadian society, governments give very poor people money to help them out, but do not give the same amount of money to wealthier people. Redistribution is equitable so that all people have equal opportunities to live safe, secure, healthy lives.

- Why would we want to redistribute resources in an equitable way?
- What does this activity demonstrate? *In our society, some people have more and some have less. Some people are very wealthy and live their lives in luxury, and some people live their lives in poverty. These inequalities seem unfair or unjust in our society. So governments redistribute resources in as equitable a way as possible so that all members of society have the chance to be physically and psychologically safe and secure.*
- Do you think our governments today are doing an adequate job of redistributing resources in our society? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 11, PART 2: Defining Equitable Redistribution of Resources

1. In partners, students come up with their own definition of ‘equitable redistribution of resources’.
2. Partners share definitions with another pair of students, and have an opportunity to edit their own.
3. Hand out **Activity 11: BLM 1** (Definitions of Redistribution). Give students time to read over the definitions on the hand-out and to edit their own if they wish, using the ideas from the hand-out definitions, but keeping the words their own.
4. Share and discuss students’ definitions in a large group.

Discussion

- Why do we redistribute in our society? *While markets might generate efficiency or good use of resources, they do not generate equity. Since our society values equality and the absence of poverty, we redistribute to increase equality and reduce poverty. To achieve such equity and fairness, we use government intervention, for example, through anti-poverty policy such as redistribution of income.*

“[T]he market system does not necessarily provide for an equitable or fair distribution of income. Whether we are rich or poor may depend in large measure on our inheritance. It may depend on how fortunate we were in owning a plot of well-located or mineral-rich land. Or, it may depend on having the kind of skills that just happen to command a high price in the market. Thus, governments have the task of defining what we mean by equity and then developing and implementing programs to ensure that income is distributed equitably.”³¹⁸

A “major characteristic of the Canadian mixed-market economy is the role of government... [G]overnments influence our economy through taxation, expenditures, regulations, and production of goods and services. Governments become involved in the economy in an attempt to rectify some of the failures of the market system. Groups such as people with disabilities, the sick, the elderly and very young, for example, may not receive enough to sustain a reasonable standard of living. Governments, therefore, use their taxation and spending programs to redistribute income in favour of the less fortunate.”³¹⁹

- Do you agree with redistribution? Why or why not?
- How does redistribution apply to people who are homeless or precariously housed?

³¹⁸ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 261.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31

- How can governments obtain the money needed to redistribute income and other resources to people who need them? *The taxation system – governments collect money from the people through taxation. For example, income tax: people pay different amounts of taxes based on their income. People with high incomes are taxed at a higher rate than low-income people. People who have very little money do not pay income tax. The government uses the money it collects from taxes to pay for services that we all use (e.g. roads, hospitals, schools), and to pay for services for or to transfer income to certain people who must be eligible to receive the service or transfer, such as people who lose their jobs and receive employment insurance, or people whose incomes are below a certain level and receive income assistance or welfare, or families with children who receive child benefits.*
- If we did not redistribute any resources in our society, what might happen?
- What kinds of attitudes or misunderstandings might develop between groups with different access to resources?

Further Reading:

“Government Redistribution in Canada” by Krishna Pendakur, Professor of Economics, Simon Fraser University (Activity 11: BLM 2).

- A form of exchange that involves collection of surplus or wealth by a “central” individual, group, or institution that controls how the wealth is redistributed and used.³²⁰
- A policy that taxes some individuals and uses the proceeds to pay transfers to others.³²¹
- A mechanism whereby a politically or economically powerful individual (or group) collects goods and services from the members of society and reallocates them among the society's members.³²²
- An economic theory or policy that advocates reducing inequalities in the distribution of wealth.³²³
- A central tenet of most modern economies whereby a nation's wealth is channeled from those who have more to those below a certain income level, through taxes that pay for welfare benefits.³²⁴
- Individuals and groups on higher incomes or wealth distributing to those on lower incomes or wealth. Redistribution by government is usually through transfers, regulation or provision of public services. Transfers involve the collection of money from people through the tax system and the payment of income to people through payments such as welfare (or income assistance), unemployment assistance....The minimum wage or rent controls are examples of regulation. Public transport and local authority housing are examples of state provision of services.³²⁵
- Inequalities in the distribution of income exist in Canada. “Some individuals and families pass their lives in poverty while others enjoy life in luxury. Inequalities can be seen....also among the various provinces and regions in the country....Such inequalities offend our sense of what is fair and just and make an equitable distribution of income an important objective. The goal of an equitable distribution of income does not mean *equal* incomes for all, however, but rather a ‘fair’ distribution of income.”³²⁶
- “...[T]he market system may produce inequalities of wealth and some government programs and policies therefore aim to redistribute incomes. Income taxes are designed to take more from the affluent than from the poor. Some government programs are made available to all (although they are not really free since we pay for them in our taxes). Other programs may be specifically designed to help the disadvantaged...by providing them with an income or with institutional or professional care.”³²⁷

³²⁰ <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415485395/glossary.asp>

³²¹ <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~alandear/glossary/r.html>

³²² <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/anth370/gloss.html>

³²³ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/redistribution>

³²⁴ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/redistribution-of-wealth.html>

³²⁵ <http://www.combatpoverty.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm#R>

³²⁶ *Economics: A Canadian Perspective* by James D. Thexton, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 32.

³²⁷ *Ibid.* (p. 29)

By Krishna Pendakur, Professor of Economics, Simon Fraser University

In Canada, inequalities in income exist: some individuals and families live their lives in poverty while others enjoy life in luxury. Since our society values equality and the absence of poverty, the federal and provincial governments develop programs to **redistribute** income in an equitable way in order to reduce poverty and to ensure that all members of society live safe, healthy, secure lives. When resources, such as income, are transferred from one person to another, we call this **redistribution**.

Governments transfer income and other resources from people who have a lot of money to people who have little or nothing. In other words, resources flow down the 'distribution of well-being', from rich people to poor people. This is called **progressive redistribution**.

Governments generally use five main tools to redistribute resources: (1) taxation, (2) transfers of income, (3) provision of goods and services, (4) social assistance programs that transfer income and provide goods and services, and (5) regulations. These five types of government action together comprise the government's ability to redistribute from one person to another in order to increase equality and reduce poverty.

TAXATION: Taxation is the tool governments use to raise money that can then be redistributed directly to individuals and to services for the public. Governments tax many activities and types of income. **Income taxes** are applied to labour and investment income. **Sales taxes** are incurred when businesses sell goods and services to people. **Duties** are applied to some imported goods, like imported wine. **Excise taxes** are charged on goods that could be harmful to people or the environment and that society considers as luxuries, for example, goods such as cigarettes, gasoline, and alcohol.

Income taxes in Canada are **progressive**: individuals earning more than about \$125,000 per year pay about 45 cents on every dollar they earn above \$125,000. In contrast, individuals earning only about \$10,000 per year pay no income taxes, and, if they have children, may get money from the government even though they pay no income taxes. Other taxes are not progressive. For example, cigarette taxes account for a higher proportion of the budgets of poor households than of rich households.

TRANSFERS OF INCOME: Governments transfer income (money) raised from tax revenue to people. Some transfers are targeted to particular income groups and go only to people who are eligible for that particular transfer. If an income transfer is universal, it goes to everyone regardless of their income. These transfers take the form of cheques that the federal or provincial governments write to individual people. Most of these transfers are administered through the tax system.

The biggest transfers of income come in the form of public pensions (the Canada Pension Plan and Old-Age Security). These transfers are paid to retired and elderly people who receive up to about \$1100 per month. The next largest transfers are a set of transfers to families with children. The Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit are transfers that are targeted to low-income families with children. They transfer up to \$300 per month per child. The Universal Child Care Benefit transfers \$100 per month per child to all Canadian families with children under the age of six, regardless of their income levels.

PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES: Governments also use tax revenue to pay for goods and services that are provided to the public, such as public health care, policing, transportation infrastructure, and public education. These services are typically provided to people at a level that does not depend on their income. So even though rich people pay income taxes at a higher rate than poor people, both rich and poor people are provided with the same level of public services, be they health or education or other public services. Because rich people pay, in the form of income taxes, the bulk of the costs of public services, the whole package is **redistributive** towards poorer people.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE - TRANSFERS OF MONEY AND PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES: Provincial governments in Canada run *social assistance programs*. These are programs that transfer money and provide goods and services to individuals and families who are very poor, with very low income and little or no wealth or assets. Income assistance programs typically transfer quite small amounts of money (in the form of cheques) to people who are eligible. Income assistance rates are well below the low-income cut-offs used by Statistics Canada to measure poverty in Canada. In addition, social assistance programs offer some goods and services to people, including subsidized housing, and access to health and mental health services.

REGULATIONS: The federal and provincial governments pass laws that regulate how firms and workers can interact with each other. The two most relevant forms of law for matters of income distribution are laws that give power to unions, and minimum wage laws. If laws are written so that unions are more powerful, then workers will tend to make more money at the expense of their employers. Minimum wages are set by provincial governments, and they put a lower limit on the hourly wage payable to a worker. In BC, the minimum wage is \$8 per hour for most workers and is currently (in 2010) the lowest in Canada.

HOW GOVERNMENT REDISTRIBUTION HAS CHANGED IN CANADA

Since 1990, government redistribution in Canada has changed in several ways, resulting mostly in a tax and transfer system that redistributes less towards poor families than it used to.

1. **Tax rates on rich individuals have fallen consistently since 1995.** In 1995, the tax rate on income in excess of \$125,000 was about 55% in most provinces. Currently, it is around 45% in most provinces. This means that a person earning \$200,000 would pay at least \$7500 less in income taxes today than in 1995.
2. **Provincial governments have uniformly reduced the eligibility for income assistance, and have failed to keep income assistance rates up with inflation.** Thus, the proportion of poor people who can get income assistance has declined, and the purchasing power of those who do receive it has also declined.
3. **The federal government has increased transfers of money to low income families with children, and away from low income families without children.** This means that childless people have less income support from government than people with children.
4. **The federal government has retained its commitment to support public pensions for the elderly, though they are slightly reduced in scope since the early 1990s.**
5. **The federal government reduced and then eliminated its programs to build public housing in the 1980s and early 1990s, shifting the responsibilities to provincial governments.** In BC, the provincial government built some social housing in the 1990s, but then in the 2000s, dedicated its housing resources almost solely to housing aimed at the elderly. Since 2008, the Province of BC has committed some resources to building social housing for the non-elderly poor.
6. **Minimum wages have not risen as much as the cost of living in most provinces.** In BC, the minimum wage has been \$8 per hour for most workers since 2001, and is currently (in 2010) the lowest in Canada.

Governments choose how much to redistribute from rich to poor people. They do so by choosing how much to tax rich people, how much money to give to poor people, and how much to spend on goods and services. But, they face a constraint. They cannot spend more on goods, services and transfers than they collect in tax revenue. If governments choose to give more to the poor and/or spend more on public goods and services, then they must tax more. Likewise, if they choose to tax less, they must give less or spend less.

The choice made by all levels of government in Canada since the mid 1990s has been to tax less.

Consequently, governments have engaged in less redistribution towards the poor and have reduced their commitment to publicly-provided goods and services. The increase in homelessness is linked to this choice.

ACTIVITY 12: WE CAN END HOMELESSNESS - POLICY TOOLS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Students will:

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

Materials:

- A copy of **Activity 12: BLM 1** for each student
- Optional: A copy of **Activity 12: BLM 2** for each student or pair of students
- A copy of **Activity 12: BLM 3** for each student
- Students will need to refer back to **Activity 4: BLM 4** and **Activity 11: BLM 2**, so make sure copies are available for them if they don't already have them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Review what students learned from Activities 4 and 11 and other Activities before doing this activity.

Activity:

1. Ask students the following question: "What can be done to end homelessness?" Individually or in partners, students review what they learned from Activity 4, Activity 11 and other Activities. In particular, students should review **Activity 4: BLM 4** (p. 1-5) and **Activity 11: BLM 2**. They can fill in the circles on **Activity 12: BLM 1**.
2. As a group, discuss students' responses. Some things to consider:
What are the three main things that contribute to homelessness, particularly when combined?

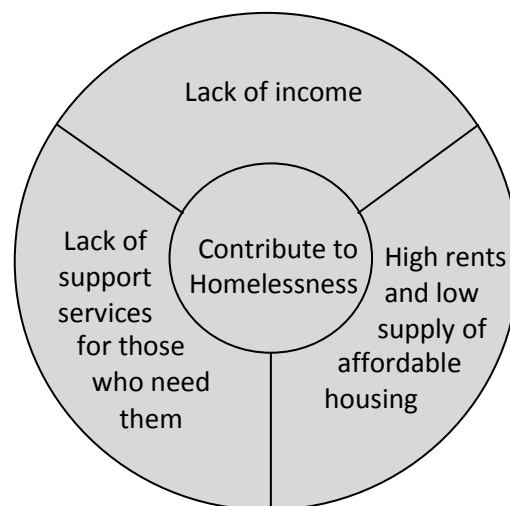
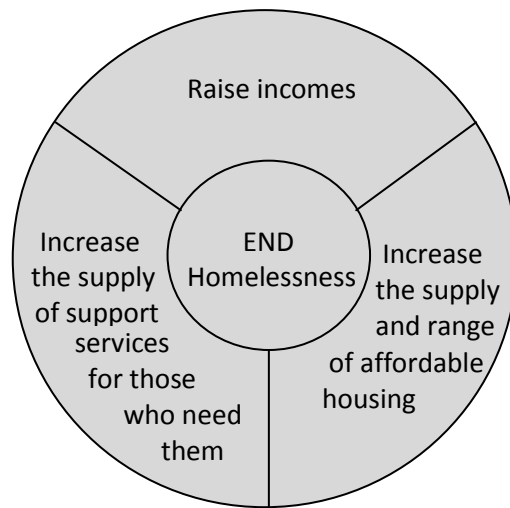


Figure 1 – A combination of factors contribute to homelessness

If these are the primary drivers of homelessness, what could be done to reduce or end homelessness?

- *We could raise incomes, and*
- *We could increase the supply of affordable housing, and*
- *We could increase the supply, range and coordination of support services for those who need them*



3. Divide students into small groups of 3 or 4. Tell them that they have been asked to form a committee to provide the municipal, provincial and federal governments with recommendations on how to end homelessness. As a committee, they need to brainstorm specific policies that governments can create to raise the incomes of poor people, increase the supply and range of affordable housing options, and increase the supply of support services. Tell students that they can refer to the information they have learned in previous lessons. Ask students to give their committee a name.

You may wish to give students **Activity 12: BLM 2** or you may prefer to let students decide how they want to take notes. Encourage students to be specific with their recommendations. For instance, saying that incomes can be raised by giving people more money is too general. Saying that the provincial government could raise income assistance rates and expand eligibility criteria and simplify the rules of the income assistance program is more specific. Encourage students to think about where the money will come from to pay for all of their recommendations.

4. Have each committee present their recommendations and facilitate a full-class discussion.
5. Hand out **Activity 12: BLM 3** to students. Do they agree with these recommendations? Can they think of or, by doing some research, find others? How do they compare to their committee's recommendations?

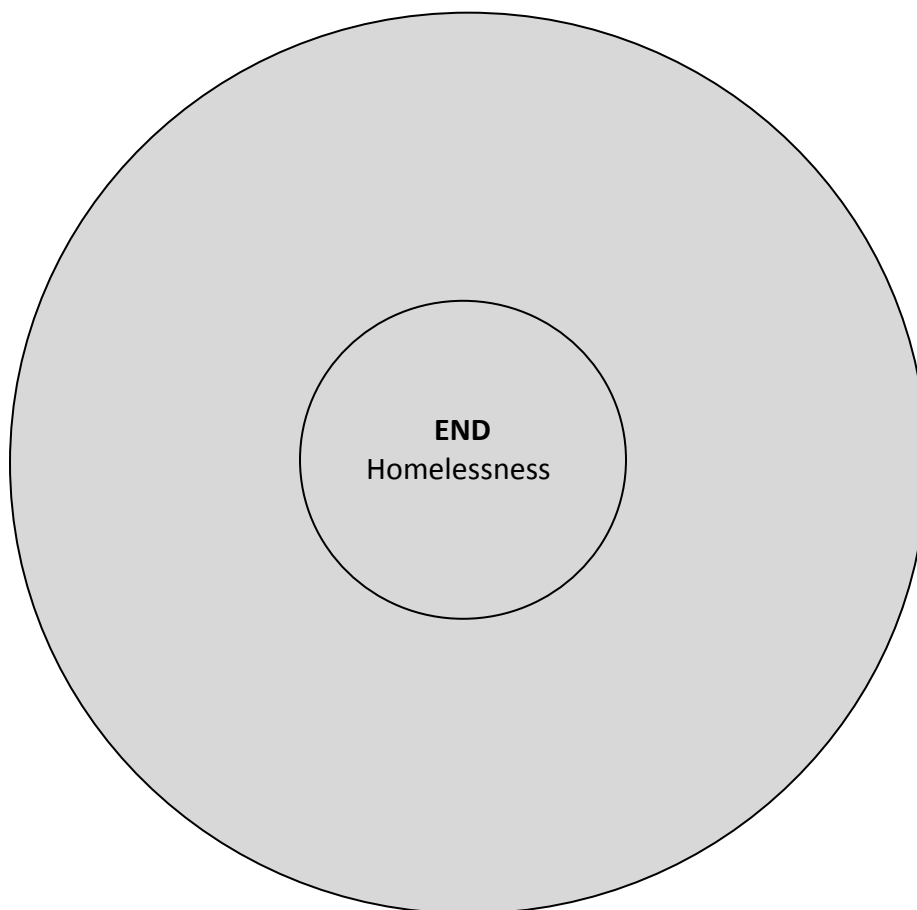
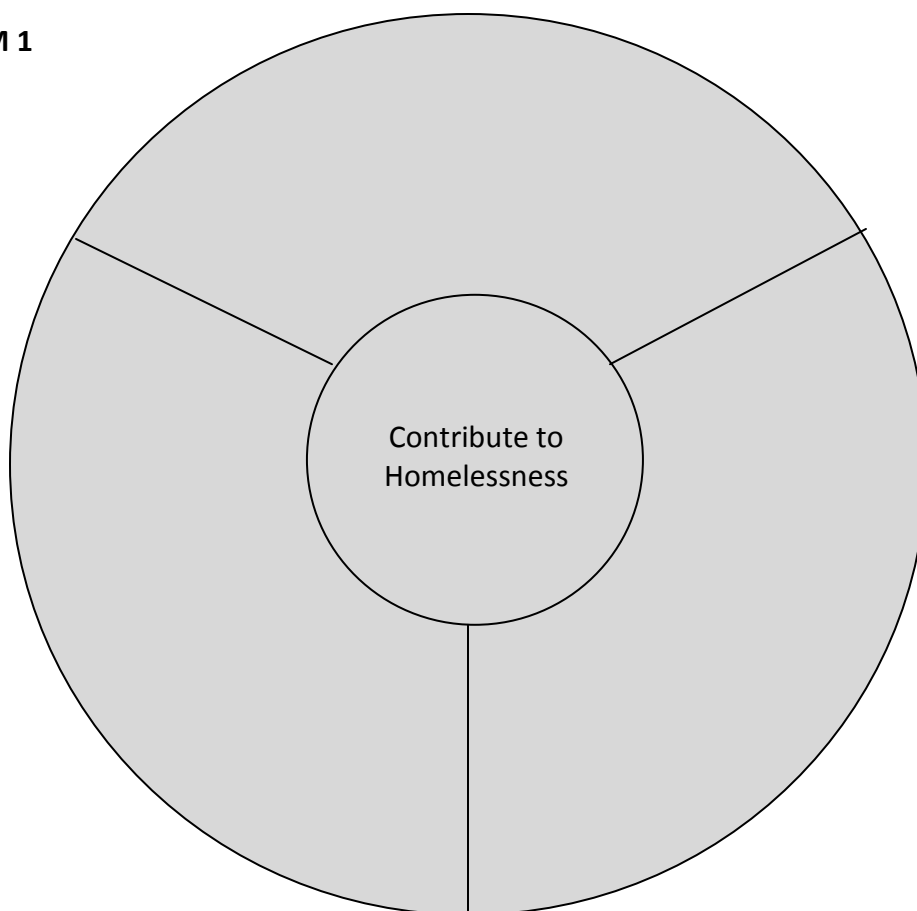
Extension:

- Which policy tool (or tools) do you think will be the most effective at ending homelessness? Why? Or do all of them need to be addressed equally?
- Students choose one or more areas (raising incomes, increasing the supply and range of affordable housing options, increasing the supply of support services) and research it/them in more depth to see what is being done in your community, BC, and/or Canada.

Further reading:

Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada Edited by: D. Hulchanski, P. Campsie, S.B.Y. Chau, S.H. Hwang, & E. Paradis (2009), Cities Centre Press, University of Toronto. An E-book: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=45761&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

Activity 12: BLM 1



Activity 12: BLM 2 You and your committee members have been asked to provide municipal, provincial and federal governments with recommendations on how to end homelessness. What will you tell them to do?

Committee Name:

Committee Members:

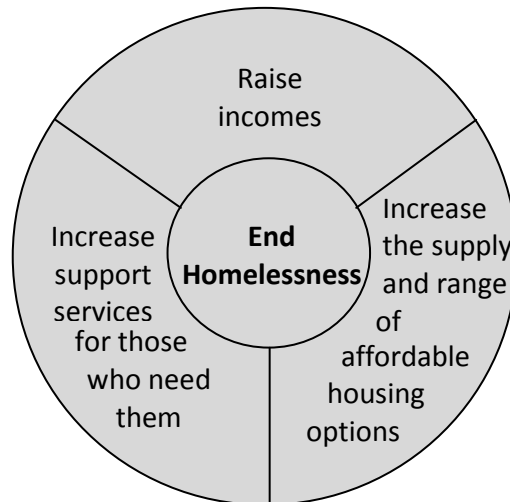
What can we do to raise incomes of poor people?	What can we do to increase the supply and range of affordable housing options?	What can we do to increase the supply, range and coordination of support services?

All of these things will cost money. Where will the money come from to pay for them?

Governments, whether city, provincial or federal, create and implement **policies** in the form of laws, regulations, decisions and actions in order to solve public issues, such as homelessness.

The homelessness we see on the streets today is directly linked to government decisions that have left our society's most vulnerable people without access to income, affordable housing and support services.

Therefore, government policies intending to end homelessness need to target **all three of these areas**.



1. PROVIDE A BASIC AND ADEQUATE INCOME TO POOR PEOPLE

Among other things, homelessness is affected by the extent to which governments intervene and redistribute income to poor people. There are many policy options available that would increase the incomes of poor people.

- The provincial government could increase the support and shelter components of income assistance
- The provincial government could reduce the barriers to, simplify the rules of and expand eligibility criteria of income assistance
- The provincial government could raise the minimum wage and eliminate the training wage
- The provincial and federal governments could increase employment assistance and training programs, and target them to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness

2. INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND RANGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing is a key to preventing and ending homelessness. A policy response to the lack of affordable housing would be the creation of a greater supply and range of affordable housing units built by governments and private developers.

- The provincial government could increase funding for subsidized units, including social housing units for people who can live independently, supportive housing and transitional housing units
- The federal government could re-enter the market for subsidized housing
- Municipal governments could create legislation or regulation to encourage private developers to build more privately-built, publicly-subsidized rental housing

- The federal and municipal governments could create legislation or regulation to encourage or subsidize private developers to enter the rental housing market and to preserve the existing stock of rental housing
- Provincial and municipal governments could ensure that the shelter system has sufficient number of beds to meet emergency needs (while simultaneously providing enough affordable and supportive housing to minimize the need for emergency shelters)

3. INCREASE THE SUPPLY, RANGE AND COORDINATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

- The provincial government could increase the supply and range of publicly-funded services that support people who are homeless and help keep them housed once in housing
- The provincial government could increase the supply and range of support services that meet the needs of specific groups, e.g. Aboriginal people; youth; people with mental illness, addictions, HIV/AIDS, and/or head/brain injuries; and people with concurrent disorders/multiple challenges
- The provincial government could improve the coordination between the variety of government departments that provide support services (health, social services, housing, corrections, education and policing) and balance the provision of services among different populations

AS A SOCIETY, WHERE DO WE CHOOSE TO SPEND OUR MONEY?

Governments must continually make choices regarding how much revenue should be collected and how to spend it. Should governments raise tax revenue, or leave that money in the hands of the income earners? Should money be spent on fighter jets, hospitals, education, social workers, garbage disposal, policing, increased welfare payments, the arts and cultural/music festivals, or social housing?

CHOOSING TO SPEND MONEY TO END HOMELESSNESS

Many people believe that it is the responsibility of governments to choose to spend money to improve the lives of people on the margins of society, including homeless people and those at risk of being homeless.

WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM?

One way governments raise revenue (money) is through **taxes**. If we want to spend money to improve the lives of homeless people, we can raise that money through taxation.

Income tax rates in BC have been declining for 15 years. In 1995, the tax rate on income over \$125,000 was about 55%. Today it is around 45%. This means that a person with a \$200,000/year income pays in 2010 about \$7500 less in taxes than s/he did in 1995, representing a lot less money that the government has to spend.

Increasing tax rates, or stopping their decline, would raise revenue which can be used to transfer resources to poor households and individuals, to build housing, and to provide support services.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR THESE THINGS TO HAPPEN?

Ending homelessness is not complicated, though it is expensive. We know how to do it and have done it before. We had much less homelessness along with more social programs and publicly-funded housing options in the past. It takes commitment on the part of citizens and governments to make things happen.

ACTIVITY 13: TAKE ACTION

Students will:

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

Here are some ways you can foster a sense of agency and active citizenship in your students.

Encourage your students to:

RESEARCH A QUESTION YOU HAVE ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

- Choose a question that you would like to answer about homelessness and research it.

TEACH OTHERS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

- Find out what is going on about homelessness in your community. Conduct interviews with members of a group working to end homelessness, or a group working to support homeless people, or city council, or a task force on homelessness, examine homelessness data, invite someone who knows about homelessness in your community to come and talk to your class.
- What's going on? What is being done? What needs to be done?
- Prepare a **presentation** to teach students in your schools or members of your community about homelessness in your community (this could be in the form of a slide show, a public service announcement (PSA), a skit or role play, or...)
- Create a **short film** or **digital story** about homelessness to show students in your school, members of your community, and others. For an example, see the digital story, **Misconceptions of the Downtown Eastside** (3 min 38 sec) produced by Sam Herman, Mark Harrison, Assis Brioschi-Serrano, high school students from Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver, in 2008. The students were inspired to create this powerful digital story after Dr. Gabor Mate visited their school and spoke about Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and misunderstandings and stereotyping. The film was produced as part of the Yayem Digital Storytelling program (www.yayem.com) supported by Atira Women's Resource Society (<http://atira.bc.ca>). View film at: <http://www.yayem.com/video/751/mas-videoflv>

LETTER WRITING

"It is your responsibility as a citizen of a democracy to go to everyone who is running for office or has been elected into office and let them know that you hold them absolutely accountable for the suffering of every single person that is on the street."

Judy Graves, Housing Advocate and Coordinator, Tenant Assistance Program, City of Vancouver in the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, 2008

- Research homelessness in your community and region and write a letter to your municipal, provincial and federal government representatives, expressing your opinions and what you think needs to be done to end homelessness. Include ideas and concepts you have learned from the activities you did about homelessness.
- See **Activity 13: BLM 1** for tips on writing letters to the government
- Sample letters at: www.endhomelessnessnow.ca/how-you-can-help/government-contacts/
- Find your MLA: www.leg.bc.ca/mla/
- Find your MP: www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Language=E

WRITE AN OPINION PIECE OR OTHER ARTICLE ON HOMELESSNESS

- Submit the article to a local newspaper or magazine.
- Megaphone Magazine (www.megaphonemagazine.com) is Vancouver's street paper. It is sold on the streets of Vancouver by homeless and low-income vendors. Vendors buy the paper for 50 cents and sell the magazine to customers by donation. All money from the transaction goes into the pocket of the vendor. Megaphone will accept submissions of articles about homelessness from students. For more information, contact Megaphone at: editor@megaphonemagazine.com

DO A FUNDRAISER FOR A LOCAL SERVICE AGENCY THAT SUPPORTS HOMELESS PEOPLE

- As a class, research different service providers in your community and choose one or two to donate to. Conduct a fundraising event to raise the money. Include awareness-raising about homelessness in the event so you educate the people who attend.

VOLUNTEER

- Contact local organizations and see how you can help (some will not accept volunteers who are under age 18 or 19). Participate in a community meal program that feeds the homeless. While this won't necessarily end homelessness, it can give you deeper insights into what homelessness is all about and you may meet some incredible, inspiring people in the process.

DONATE ITEMS

- Contact local organizations to find out if they need any items such as clothing or equipment. Gather needed items and donate them to an organization.

CHALLENGE MYTHS AND NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

- Review the Activity 1: Myth Busting - Ranking activity on pages 49-54, including the Glossary of Relevant Terms on p. 51. Has the way in which you rank the statements changed? If yes, how? Why?
- Challenge myths and negative stereotypes whenever you encounter them.
- Watch **Misconceptions of the Downtown Eastside** <http://www.yayem.com/video/751/mas-videoflv> by three Vancouver high school students – see previous page for more information. Make your own video.

JOIN A GROUP THAT RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AND TAKES ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS

WATCH *SOMETHING TO EAT, A PLACE TO SLEEP AND SOMEONE WHO GIVES A DAMN* AND REVIEW THE SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF THE FILM (See Activity 3A: BLM 2) (See p. 55-63)

More ideas at:

Citywide Housing Coalition: www.citywidehousingcoalition.org

The Homeless Hub: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/>

End Homelessness Now: www.endhomelessnessnow.ca

Habitat for Humanity: <http://www.vancouverhabitat.bc.ca/> and www.habitat.ca

Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness: www.stophomelessness.ca

Resources (including Gr. 6-7 teacher's guide): <http://stophomelessness.ca/learn-more-2/learn-more/>

What I Can Do: <http://stophomelessness.ca/learn-more-2/how-to-help/what-can-i-do/>

Pivot Legal Society: www.pivotlegal.org and, for action ideas, www.homelessnessisover.ca

Raising the Roof: www.raisingtheroof.org

"No Place Like Home: an awareness and action resource for youth" available at:

http://www.sharedlearnings.org/resources/rtr/en/YthEdctPkg_v2.pdf

Activity 13: BLM 1

Tips for writing a letter to the government³²⁸

- Consider your audience (who will read the letter?). If you are writing about a federal issue, policy or legislation, write to your local Member of Parliament (MP). If you are writing about a provincial issue, policy or legislation, write to your local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). If you are writing about a local municipal issue, policy or legislation write to your mayor or city council.
- Begin with a formal salutation: “Dear Minister....”; “Dear Mayor....”; “Dear Mr./Ms....”
- Clearly state who you are.
- State the purpose of your letter – what do you hope to accomplish by sending the letter?
- If you are writing about a particular policy, law or bylaw, include its name and/or number. State why you are for or against it.
- State how the legislation affects you or the community in which you live, if applicable.
- State the action(s) you want the reader of the letter to take in response to your letter.
- If you want to advocate change or new legislation, clearly support your position. Do your research and make your arguments logical. Include pertinent facts and cases so that your letter will be as persuasive as possible.
- If you are writing to oppose a policy, bill, law, bylaw or other legislation, consider suggesting an alternative.
- You may want to request a direct response to your letter, or you may want to follow up with a phone call.
- Close your letter by thanking the recipient for the work that he/she does or by making a renewed appeal.
- Always be polite and respectful.
- Be clear and concise. Try to keep the letter to one page.

³²⁸ Adapted from <http://www.writeexpress.com/government.htm>

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

Films about homelessness.....	147
Canadian websites with teacher’s guides on homelessness.....	156
Other resources (reports, articles, books, websites, novels, poetry, music, etc.).....	157

FILMS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

The following films cover a range of topics including: general homelessness, Aboriginal homelessness, mental illness, youth homelessness, families with children, drug addiction and the drug trade, and women and homelessness. The majority of the films are based in Vancouver and other parts of BC. Where possible, information on ordering the films has been provided.

Note: Activity 3A on page 55 is based on the film, *Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn*, by Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve (film description on p. 149). Activity 10 on page 121 is based on the film, *The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink*, by Sterling Pache and Danse Crowkiller (film description on p. 151). Teachers can order these two films by contacting Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film(s). *The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink* can also be purchased directly from Danse Crowkiller. See page 151.

GENERAL HOMELESSNESS

after homelessness... - (Vancouver, 2009) (Headlines Theatre) Theatre making policy

Does Metro Vancouver need a theatre project that rings an alarm bell about homelessness? Absolutely not. Headlines Theatre collaborated with people who have been homeless and various agencies working on the issue to create an interactive Forum Theatre project. *after homelessness...* asks questions about how to create safe, appropriately supported, and affordable housing in the context of having been homeless and the mental health issues that are often attached. A [Community Action Report](#),³²⁹ generated from the interactive Forums, suggests policies to several levels of government. For more information on this Jessie-award-winning production:

Website: http://headlinestheatre.com/past_work/after_homelessness/index.htm

Contact: Erin Offer, Office/Production Manager, Headlines Theatre, admin@headlinestheatre.com

Broken Down – (Cowichan Valley, BC) (2008) (60 min) (Harold Joe)

Local Aboriginal filmmaker Harold C. Joe's gritty, compassionate and important film "*Broken Down*" is a story of homelessness in the Cowichan Valley and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The film chronicles Harold's four-day journey spent living on the streets to find out why folks become homeless and how drugs and alcohol keep them that way. His own experiences were both tough and touching. His surprise at how hard it really is to live the exposed life of the homeless added personal truth to the gritty reality of the story. His concern for the area's homeless found a fine point following the tragic death of Paul Francis James, who had been living in a makeshift shed near downtown Duncan when it burned down.

Harold Joe graduated from the "Aboriginal Film & Television Training Program" at Capilano University. He is fascinated with film and has a passion for documentaries based on Aboriginal culture. "As an Aboriginal filmmaker, I would like to protect our future by preserving our past, capturing our elders on film as they recollect history to pass onto future generations. I feel it is important to educate not only First Nations people, but the non-Aboriginal community"

Website: <http://www.visionkeeper.ca/Broken.htm>

Contact: email Harold Joe at hcjoe@visionkeeper.ca

³²⁹ *After homelessness...Community Action Report: Policy Recommendations arising from audience responses to the Headlines Theatre Production* by Gail Franklin, February 2010, http://headlinestheatre.com/past_work/after_homelessness/reports/AH_CAR_Final_Report.pdf

Carts of Darkness – (North Vancouver) (2008) (60 min) (Murray Siple) (NFB)

In the picture-postcard community of North Vancouver, local bottle pickers have turned the act of binning into a thriving subculture of shopping cart racing. Murray Siple, a former snowboarder and sport film director injured in a serious car accident ten years ago, returns to filmmaking to capture their story in the documentary *Carts of Darkness*. Shot in stunning high-definition and featuring tracks from Black Mountain, Ladyhawk, Vetiver, Bison, and Alan Boyd, of Little Sparta, *Carts of Darkness* borrows the cinematic language of extreme sports films to capture the risk and intensity of life lived on the very edge.

View online at: <http://films.nfb.ca/carts-of-darkness/> (NFB)

Devil Plays Hardball – (Vancouver) (2006) (60 min) (Audrey Mehler and CBC)

“If you could get one person off the street, would you? Could you? *Devil Plays Hardball* is a radical interventionist documentary by Paperny Films that seeks to answer this question. Four well-established Vancouver residents have 10 months to mentor homeless individuals from various Vancouver neighborhoods who have the desire – but not necessarily the means – to re-enter mainstream society. What ensues is a complicated journey that provides an up-close and intimate look at the people most of us choose to ignore – Canada's homeless.” *Devil Plays Hardball* is directed by Nijole Kujmickas, and produced by Audrey Mehler of Paperny Films in association with CBC Newsworld.

Website: www.cbc.ca/passionateeyesunday/devilplayshardball/

Contact: email CBC Learning at cbclearning@cbc.ca

Purchase online at:

http://www.cbclearning.ca/CBCEDS/shopping/product.aspx?CatalogName=CBCEDSBase&CategoryName=social_sciences_all_social_sciences_titles&Product_ID=ZZY-07-15&Variant_ID=ZZY-07-15-010101

Down Here – (Vancouver) (2008) (30 min) (Charles Wilkinson)

A short documentary film about life without

Down Here is a story about a place that is growing in the heart of our city. It is a place we occasionally glimpse from our cars, a harshly surreal world inhabited by fringe people – the poor, hungry, sick, ashamed. Alongside cinematically-filmed scenes of dark allies, refuse-strewn streets and crumbling buildings are intercut conversations with eight remarkable residents. These street dwellers tell us their tales of life without: Life without family, shelter, friendship, comfort, love; life without resistance to or protection from the addictions, the predators; life without the safety net that was once considered a fundamental human right. We begin to see them as what they once were, what they struggle to remain – sons, daughters, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, lovers. We see their daily quests – their struggles to exist in a hostile and frequently toxic environment. These intimate conversations unfold in a most unusual way. Homeless people, when interviewed at all, are typically filmed on the street, in available light, competing for our attention with traffic, sirens, and fellow residents invariably hostile to the camera crew. In *Down Here* the residents are filmed in a manner usually reserved for celebrities – they are beautifully lit, the environment is quiet and safe, and the conversations are one-on-one. No film crew. The director is alone in a room with the subject and the camera. As the story progresses, we become more and more deeply immersed in this alien world. And then the film pulls back sharply outside the box and we see ourselves.

Screened in competition at: Beloit, Chicago International Film Festival; Victoria International Film Festival; the Vancouver International Film Festival, where it was voted “most popular Canadian short”; and the [Cleveland International Film Festival](#) where it won [Best Documentary Short Film](#)

Contact: Moving Images Distribution by email at mailbox@movingimages.ca or call 604-684-3014

The Homeless Home Movie (USA) (1996) (84 min) (Patrick Hennessey)

The Homeless Home Movie interweaves the stories of five very different homeless people over the course of a year....Their opinions, actions, and histories come together to expose the harsh realities and problems of

homelessness. The personal stories of the various homeless people are complemented by the contrasting viewpoints of two compelling homeless advocates, whose radically different ideas create a powerful and provocative debate throughout the video... Together all seven of these contemporary stories create a dramatic and diverse portrait of homelessness that will provoke discussion about the social, psychological, and political dimensions of poverty, homelessness, and welfare.

To order: http://www.homelesshomemovie.com/order_info.htm

Website: www.homelesshomemovie.com

Homelessness and the Human Predicament (Vancouver) (2009) (15 min) (Kirsty Matthews)

The documentary follows the progression of Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson's initiative to provide emergency shelters for the homeless over the winter. His appeal is urgent: "I don't want to see anyone die on the streets this winter!" Tragically Robertson's appeal is in vain, somebody does die on the streets: A 47-year-old woman known as Tracey, burns to death whilst trying to stay warm. Public response to her death is varied and sometimes vicious. One woman comments, "This woman contributed nothing to society and she would continue to be mooching off society were she still alive... this woman deserves no obituary, no grief." Tracey's death and public response to it compels the film to ask some serious questions: How does our response to homelessness reflect our sense of humanity? Has Vancouver developed an 'us-them' culture, with 'haves' on the one side and 'have-nots' on the other? Is homelessness a symptom of a bigger problem affecting our society?

Contact: email Kirsty Matthews at kirstymat@gmail.com

Misconceptions of the Downtown Eastside – (Vancouver) (2008) (3 min 38 sec) (Sam Herman, Mark Harrison, Assis Brioschi-Serrano) This powerful "digital story" was produced by three high school students at Prince of Wales Secondary School, Vancouver after Dr. Gabor Mate visited their school and spoke about Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and misunderstandings and stereotyping. The film was produced as part of the Yayem Digital Storytelling program (www.yayem.com) supported by Atira Women's Resource Society (<http://atira.bc.ca>).

View film at: <http://www.yayem.com/video/751/mas-videoflv>

The Open Door (Victoria) (about 12 min) (Asterisk Productions Ltd.)

A video about a Victoria drop-in centre (Open Door, now called Our Place) that offers a safe haven and a sense of family. The film provides a good insight about the real people who use the shelter and they contribute back.

Contact: email Asterisk Productions at distribution@asterisk.ca

Website: <http://www.asterisk.bc.ca/html/recent.htm> (scroll down the page)

Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn - (Vancouver) (2008) (35 min) (Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve) This persuasive and honest documentary explores the homeless epidemic in Metro Vancouver by putting a face to homelessness and giving a voice to the homeless and those who work with them. It is a film filled with hope. Find out how you can make a difference. This film accompanies Activity 3A on page 55 and will be provided at no cost to teachers to use for educational purposes.

To order the film: email Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia:

linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film.

StreetCity – (Toronto) (1998) (Available in 74, 58 and 47:30 min versions) (Close Up Films)

StreetCity is a compelling verité feature documentary about life in an experimental housing project (called StreetCity) for homeless people on Toronto's downtown east side. Award-winning filmmaker Bay Weyman interweaves events in the lives of StreetCity residents over a period of six months, to explore a microcosm of the homeless world: alcoholics, drug addicts, psychiatric survivors, the abused and the neglected. Most of all,

the film relates to the homeless as real people. StreetCity lets residents tell their own stories of hope, struggle and resignation, creating a very personal, often humorous, yet disturbing portrait of homeless society... StreetCity provides these people and others with an alternative to life on the street or traditional shelters and hostels. It offers the privacy of one's own room where residents can drink if they want (and where many do drugs), plus the freedom to come and go as they chose. Residents pay rent, usually with social assistance, and have the opportunity to participate in the management of their own community, thereby gaining a measure of self-sufficiency and self-respect -- at least in theory. *StreetCity* lets viewers decide for themselves how well it's working, and what chances street people really have to turn their lives around. Even though the film is over 10 years old, it is still relevant and the concept is still working in Toronto as Strachan House, under the Home First Society.

Website: http://closeupfilms.ca/Films/Street_City.php

The Way Home – (Vancouver and BC) (2008) (50 min) (Kevin Fitzgerald and Louvens Remy) NDP MLA, David Chudnovsky, along with some young filmmakers and his ever-present office manager Kate, crisscrossed B.C. to visit various communities and investigate the homelessness situation. Their findings made a splash when Chudnovsky announced there are now over 10,000 homeless in B.C.

Contact: email Kevin Fitzgerald at africanyoga@yahoo.com

We Are All The Key (Vancouver) (2009) (10 min) (Streetohome) Everyone should have a home. It's what is right, and what our community wants. In Vancouver today, at least 3,700 people don't have a home to call their own. Streetohome is dedicated to ensuring that residents of our city have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the support they need to make a difference in their lives. Streetohome is the first organization in Vancouver to take a systematic approach to addressing both homelessness and its root causes. We bring together people from all sectors of our community – business, non-profits, government, and citizens – to find and implement real solutions. You can help. Be part of the solution. Visit www.streetohome.org for more information.

View on-line at: <http://www.streetohome.org/homelessness-vancouver/streetohome-video> and at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahQLPodR7hl>

ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

Finding Dawn – (Vancouver and other locations) (2006) (73 min) (Christine Welsh) (NFB) Dawn Crey. Ramona Wilson. Daleen Kay Bosse. These are just three of the estimated 500 Aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in Canada over the past thirty years. Directed by acclaimed Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh, *Finding Dawn* is a compelling documentary that puts a human face to this national tragedy. This is an epic journey into the dark heart of Native women's experience in Canada. From Vancouver's skid row, where more than 60 women are missing, we travel to the "Highway of Tears" in northern British Columbia, and onward to Saskatoon, where the murders and disappearances of Native women remain unresolved. Along the road to honour those who have passed, we uncover reason for hope. It lives in Native rights activists Professor Janice Acoose and Fay Blaney. It drives events such as the annual Women's Memorial March in Vancouver and inspires communities all along the length of Highway 16 to come together to demand change. *Finding Dawn* illustrates the deep historical, social and economic factors that contribute to the epidemic of violence against Native women in this country. It goes further to present the ultimate message that stopping the violence is everyone's responsibility.

View online at: National Film Board of Canada http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn

Website: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=52581>

Teachers' guide on *Finding Dawn*: <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100567.pdf>

The Purpose of Life is Rice...Wink (Vancouver) (2009) (30 min) (Sterling Pache and Danse Crowkiller)

A character documentary shot in the first-person by Danse Crowkiller during the time he lived on the street at the corner of Commercial Drive and Kitchener Street in Vancouver. The film intimately explores Dance's day-to-day life, his art, his ideas, his involvement in the community, his friends, his contributions and his adventures. The documentary, shot in the first person, presents the opportunity to share Dance's unique spirit and his identity beyond his homelessness. It's an exciting look into the unconventional and beautiful life of an individual who gives more than he takes and is loved by his community. This film accompanies Activity 10 on page 121.

Website and trailer: www.romanticchildstudios.com/blog/2009/02/the-purpose-of-life-is-rice-wink/

To order the film: email Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia:

linda_sheldon@sfu.ca. Please provide your name, school name and address, and the course(s) for which you plan to use the film.

Purchase from Danse: The film can also be purchased directly from Danse Crowkiller, who can generally be found outside the East End Food Co-op at 1034 Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Purchasing from Danse will supplement his income.

ADDICTION AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Bevel Up – (Vancouver) (2007) (45 min) (Nettie Wild)

Bevel Up: the documentary follows street nurses from the outreach street program of the BC Centre for Disease Control as they work with youth, sex workers, and street-entrenched men and women in the alleys and hotels of Vancouver's inner city. The footage is startling in its intimacy, compassion, and real-life drama. Divided into chapters, each segment offers additional compelling on-location footage and expert interviews. Key ethical, practical and legal issues are discussed and debated by the nurses featured in the documentary as well as by a nursing ethicist and nursing practice consultant from the British Columbia College of Nurses.

Contact: National Film Board of Canada: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=53955>

Insite: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (Vancouver) (2009) (11 min) (Laurie Kindiak)

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. One of the poorest neighborhood's in Canada with one of the largest drug scenes in the country. In a neighborhood of over 16,000 people, 5000 injection drug users live and try to maintain their life. In 2003, due to an epidemic HIV rate of 30%and Hepatitis rate of 91%, Insite was opened; North America's first safe injection site. Five years later, the clinic's impact on people in that area is undeniable. Insite has forged a strong relationship in the community and has become a working part of the neighborhood itself. The people living in that area have laid a claim of ownership to the clinic. It is their place of refuge. Not only a safe injection site, but also a place to go when they're injured, or cold, or just need someone to talk to, judgment free.

Contact: email Laurie Kindiak at lkindiak@hotmail.com

Stories of Strength (Vancouver) (2007) (12 min) (Vancouver Coastal Health)

This film is a moving piece about the value of secure housing in people's lives. From Vancouver Coastal Health, the video features the personal stories of three individuals dealing with the challenges of a mental illness and/or an addiction and the support they receive from friends and family. It brings a human face to mental illness and addiction and reminds us that by focusing on strengths and abilities, people can live full and happy lives in a place that is understanding and welcoming. *Stories of Strength* was produced and is owned by Vancouver Coastal Health Authority ("VCHA").

Contact: email Amy Chang at amy.chang@vch.ca or call Amy at 604-875-4131

This Dust of Words – (USA) (2007) (62 min) (Bill Rose)

A haunting documentary elegy to thwarted promise, *This Dust of Words* traces the life of Elizabeth Wiltsee, a young writer of uncompromising talent who ultimately died a lonely death at age 50, homeless and beset by paranoid schizophrenia. Elizabeth had an IQ of 200, taught herself to read at the age of four, and was translating classical Greek at ten. She attended Stanford, where she was lauded as a student of unlimited potential. After graduation, she chose to live on the fringes, working as an au pair in Europe, in university libraries, and as a proofreader. All the while, she kept writing and reading prodigiously — sending off numerous plays and novels to publishers (all of which were rejected) — as her mental illness progressed. In 1994, not coping well and unable to work, she moved to the town of Watsonville, California, where she wound up living on the streets and sleeping on the steps of a local church. She disappeared after leaving town in 1999; her skeletal remains were found months later in a wilderness area 60 miles away. The film traces the mystery of her life, interweaving Wiltsee’s writings with archival footage of her at Stanford and interviews with her professors, her brother, and Watsonville citizens who had tried to reach out to her.

Website: <http://thisdustofwords.com/>

Contact: email Bill Rose at bill@thisdustofwords.com

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Metamorphosis: An In-Depth Look at the Life of Former Street Kids – (Vancouver) (2005) (Jennifer Mervyn)

This documentary features four BC youth, two of whom are aboriginal, who tell their stories about life on the streets and what they had to do to leave that life behind them. Politicians, police, and front-line workers are interviewed for their input in what helps facilitate exits from homelessness for young people. Concerns raised in the film include lack of available treatment for youth struggling with substance abuse, the need for treatment on demand, the deficits in the “4 Pillars Approach”, and the challenges of the Young Offenders Act. The film takes a critical look at the resilience factors in youth leaving the street, and examines the process of transition that successful youth have made. Powerful and thought-provoking, *Metamorphosis* raises important questions about the changes we need to make to help future youth successfully transition off the street.

<http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/annualreports/2006/mervyn.php>

Contact: email Jennifer Mervyn at jennifermervyn@hotmail.com

No Way Home: Canada’s Street Kids (2004) (42 min) (The Fifth Estate, CBC)

In this harrowing examination of Canada’s street youth and shelter system, Hana Gartner traces the journey of three kids who ran away at age 13 to the gritty, violent reality of the streets. Learn how they navigate through the dark corners of society: panhandling, abusing drugs and selling their bodies. The documentary offers a rare glimpse of the country’s homeless youth – about 75,000 of them – through the eyes of the kids, the Toronto mom “Angel”, and the unusual shelter she operates.

Website (Fifth Estate): http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/main_nowayhome.html

Contact: email CBC Learning at cbclearning@cbc.ca

Purchase online at:

http://www.cbclearning.ca/CBCEDS/shopping/product.aspx?CatalogName=CBCEDSBase&CategoryName=family_studies_all_family_studies_titles&Product_ID=Y8G-03-07&&Variant_ID=Y8G-03-07-010101

Youth Homelessness in Canada: the Voices of Experience (Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, St. John’s) (11 min) (Raising the Roof)

Four youth from across Canada who were formerly homeless speak about their experiences being homeless and leaving the streets. The film was produced by Raising the Roof, a Canadian charity dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness. This film is used in Activity 5 on page 84.

Go to: www.raisingtheroof.org

Click on the box in the left hand-side menu bar "Youth Share Personal Stories of Homelessness"

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Home Safe – (Toronto) (2008-2010) (Laura Sky, Sky Works Foundation)

Sky Works Charitable Foundation has produced a series of films that deal with the way in which Canadian families with children live with the threat and the reality of homelessness. **Home Safe Calgary** (2008) reveals the contrast between the promise of Calgary's booming economy and the vulnerability of those who seek a place in it – where even parents with decent-paying jobs are unable to put a roof over their family's heads.

Home Safe Toronto (2009) shows how the housing crisis in Canada is an expression of the increasing economic and job insecurity that has devastated the manufacturing sector in the Greater Toronto Area and throughout Southern Ontario. The film reveals the consequences of the "new economy," where families surviving on low wages and with no benefits, or on dwindling social assistance, are faced with the terrible choice between keeping a roof over their heads or putting food on the table. **Home Safe Hamilton** (2010) examines systemic roots of homelessness as a consequence of economic restructuring, discrimination and displacement. It includes stories of steelworkers affected by industrial layoffs, high school students living in poverty, new Canadians and Aboriginal families.

Website, trailers and ordering info: <http://skyworksfoundation.org/documentaries/index.html>

WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

It Was a Wonderful Life (USA) (1993) (82 min) (Michèle Ohayon)

In this award-winning festival standout, Academy Award nominee Michèle Ohayon presents a riveting and powerful account of six women who are members of America's growing hidden homeless population. Narrated by Jodie Foster, and with an original musical score by Melissa Etheridge, this heart-wrenching film expertly captures the hardships and triumphs these courageous women experience in their daily struggle for survival. Meet Josephine, Reena, Marie, Jeanette, Lou and Terry. They are intelligent, articulate women who had secure, active, and fulfilling lives until one day everything unraveled. Now homeless after an ugly divorce or loss of a job, these women do not show up in shelters or receive public assistance; they do not sleep in doorways or ask for handouts. Too proud to be counted, they prefer to exist under the radar, sleeping in their cars or in cheap motels. Both compelling and consciousness-raising, *It Was a Wonderful Life* cuts through the stereotypes and clichés to give a human face to this undeniable tragedy. And, with fresh insight into the plight of the homeless, Ohayon shows how these women have managed to make a life for themselves, using only their ingenuity and perseverance to get by. According to Judy Graves, Outreach Coordinator for Vancouver's Housing Department, this film could have been made here – the issue is as pressing and relevant *today in Vancouver* as it was in California 16 years ago. *It Was a Wonderful Life* is an outstanding and important film.

Contact: email Michèle Ohayon at michoula@pacbell.net

PERSONAL STORIES

The Cats of Mirikatani (USA) (2006) (74 mins) (Linda Hattendorf)

".... 'Make art not war' is Jimmy Mirikitani's motto. This 85-year-old Japanese American artist was born in Sacramento and raised in Hiroshima, but by 2001 he is living on the streets of New York with the twin towers of the World Trade Center still ominously anchoring the horizon behind him. What begins as a simple verite portrait of one homeless man will become a rare document of daily life in New York in the months leading up

to 9/11. How deeply these two stories will be intertwined cannot yet be imagined. This is the story of losing 'home' on many levels. How did Mirikitani end up on the streets? The answer is in his art. As tourists and shoppers hurry past, he sits alone on a windy corner in Soho drawing whimsical cats, bleak internment camps, and the angry red flames of the atomic bomb. When a neighboring filmmaker stops to ask about Mirikitani's art, a friendship begins that will change both their lives..." www.thecatsofmirikitani.com. Winner of numerous awards.

For information on purchasing the film, see: <http://www.thecatsofmirikitani.com/contact.php>

The Soloist (USA) (2009) (117 min) (Joe Wright Director) (Starring Jamie Foxx and Robert Downey Jr.)

"Columnist Steve Lopez (Downey) is at a dead end. The newspaper business is in an uproar, his marriage to a fellow journalist has fallen apart and he can't entirely remember what he loved about his job in the first place. Then, one day, while walking through Los Angeles' Skid Row, he sees the mysterious bedraggled figure Nathaniel Ayers (Foxx), pouring his soul into a two-stringed violin. At first Lopez approaches Ayers as just another story idea in a city of millions. But as he begins to unearth the mystery of how this alternately brilliant and distracted street musician, once a dynamic prodigy headed for fame, wound up living in tunnels and doorways, it sparks an unexpected quest. Imagining he can change Ayers' life, Lopez embarks on a quixotic mission to get him off the streets and back to the world of music. But even as he fights to save Ayers' life, he begins to see that it is Ayers – with his unsinkable passion, his freedom-loving obstinacy and his valiant attempts at connection and love – who is profoundly changing Lopez." www.soloistmovie.com The film is based on a true story.

GENTRIFICATION

Last Call at the Gladstone Hotel – (Toronto) (2007) (60 min)

When aggressive developers buy a flophouse hotel to turn it into an arts-centric hot spot, long-time staff and residents begin a five-year struggle to survive. This intimate portrait of the effects of urban renewal upon the poor reveals the unintentional roles we often play in the process of gentrification. 2008 Gemini Award Winner.

Website: <http://insurgentprojects.com/productions.html>

SOCCKER AND HOMELESSNESS

Downtown Dawgs – (Calgary) (2007) (87 min) (Mike Scullion)

Downtown Dawgs focuses on a group of homeless people who are attempting to make a change in their lifestyle by trying out for the Canadian National Homeless soccer team. Filmmaker Mike Scullion's brother Kevin is co-filmmaker and one of the coaches. The film won Official Selection: Calgary International Film Festival 2007; Edmonton International Film Festival 2007. Online article about the film at <http://thegauntlet.ca/story/11626>

Contact: email Diamond Rock Films at diamondrockfilms@gmail.com

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW22FAS9vN8&feature=related>

Homeless FC – (Hong Kong) (2007) (103 min) (James Leong)

The members of the Dawn Team are perhaps the ultimate underdogs. Chor Pat lost all his money and his family because of his gambling addiction. Ah Hung is a former gang member trying to start over. Ah Lung ended up on the streets after a series of misfortunes, and David joined because he was lonely. The only thing these men have in common, other than a deep and abiding passion for soccer, is the fact that they all live on the streets of Hong Kong. They are homeless. This is a decidedly different look at Hong Kong; the glittering towers can be

glimpsed in the distance, but the dirty gritty reality of these men's lives is one of poverty and despair. When the possibility of competing in the Homeless World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa, becomes a reality, every member of the Dawn Team must battle each other and themselves for a much-coveted spot on the squad (only eight players will be chosen). James Leong and Lynn Lee followed the team over the course of a year, capturing the highs and lows of their tumultuous journey to South Africa. Every hackneyed cliché of the sports drama (the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, the triumph of the underdog) is made anew in *Homeless F.C.*, simply because this time they're real, making this a genuine crowd pleaser in the best sense of the word. If the sight of the rather large Chor Pat waving his jersey like a flag in the bright sunlight of South Africa doesn't bring on a sappy grin, perhaps you should check your pulse.

Website: <http://www.homelessfcmovie.com/>

THE DRUG TRADE

Damage Done: The Drug War Odyssey – (2007) (Connie Littlefield) (NFB)

While they are law enforcement officers, the inherent vagueness of their oath allows room for intelligent interpretation as to what "enforcement" means. For members of L.E.A.P (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition) it means not busting you for smoking weed, hell maybe not even busting you if you have a twenty up your nose. Because for them it is no big secret that the War on Drugs is a total bust; an ideological battle getting us nowhere and in fact perpetuating a devastating cycle of misspent energy that truly, only keeps the whole mess going round. Filled with honest and totally surprising interviews from Police Officers from across North America, director Connie Littlefield's documentary *The Damage Done: The Drug War Odyssey* highlights the failure of our prohibition style war on drugs. With testimonials from cops and judges from Texas and Florida to Vancouver and California this is one of those rare documentaries that is so eloquent and concise that you couldn't think of a better way to express or even explore the subject.

Contact: National Film Board of Canada: <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/collection/film/?id=53898>

SHORT FILMS

Short Films on the Homeless Nation Website www.homelessnation.org

(Montreal, St. John's, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria) "Homeless Nation is the only website in the world created by and for the street community. It is a social network where all are welcome." The website has won numerous media and communications awards. It features videos by Homeless Nation members.

Short Videos about Homelessness on the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

Website: <http://stophomelessness.ca/learn-more-2/learn-more/videos/>

CANADIAN WEBSITES WITH TEACHER'S GUIDES AND RESOURCES ON HOMELESSNESS

THE HOMELESS HUB (www.homelesshub.ca) “was created to address the need for a single place to find homelessness information from across Canada.” The “Education” section of the website includes a range of teacher guides on homelessness for different age groups and subject areas and resources for teachers and students on homelessness.

Curriculum Units for teachers can be found at: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/Canadian-Resources-469.aspx>

Units include:

Getting Ready to Teach Homelessness

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=47759&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

An Integrated Unit on Homelessness for Elementary Schools

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---An-Integrated-Unit-on-Homelessness-for-Elementary-Schools-45743.aspx>

Exploring Homelessness through the Artists Hands

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Exploring-Homelessness-Through-the-Artists-Hands-45740.aspx>

Integrating Homelessness Issues into Family Social Sciences Classes

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Integrating-Homelessness-Issues-into-Family-Social-Sciences-Classes-45741.aspx>

Integrating Homelessness into Civics Classes

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Integrating-Homelessness-Into-Civics-Classes-45735.aspx>

The Study of Homelessness in English and Media Classes in Canadian Secondary Schools

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---The-Study-of-Homelessness-in-English-and-Media-Classes-in-Canadian-Secondary-Schools-45742.aspx>

Understanding Homelessness through Drama

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/Homeless-Hub---Understanding-Homelessness-Through-Drama-45753.aspx>

GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS (www.stophomelessness.ca)

Homelessness: A Teacher's Guide for Grades 6 and 7

<http://stophomelessness.ca/learn-more-2/learn-more/teachers-guide/>

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO (www.etfo.ca)

Home Free-Exploring Issues of Homelessness for Kindergarten-Grade 8

<http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/Documents/Home%20Free%20-%20Exploring%20Issues%20of%20Homelessness.pdf>

RAISING THE ROOF (www.raisingtheroof.org) and

SHARED LEARNINGS ON HOMELESSNESS (www.sharedlearnings.org)

No Place like Home – An Awareness and Action Resource for Youth

http://www.sharedlearnings.org/resources/rtr/en/YthEdctPkg_v2.pdf

OTHER RESOURCES

REPORTS, ARTICLES AND BOOKS

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http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2007/pdf/increase_rate_tables.pdf
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WEBSITES

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BC Women's Housing Coalition:
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Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation: www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/

Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP): <http://ccapvancouver.wordpress.com/>

City of Kelowna (Homelessness): <http://www.kelowna.ca/CM/page1012.aspx>

City of Vancouver Housing Centre: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/>

Citywide Housing Coalition: www.citywidehousingcoalition.org

Community Advocates for Little Mountain: www.my-calm.info

Comox Valley Regional District (Homelessness): <http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/notices.asp?id=6019>

End Homelessness Now: www.endhomelessnessnow.ca

Fraser Valley Housing Network: <http://www.fvhousing.com/>

Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness: www.stophomelessness.ca

Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy: www.gvss.ca

Habitat for Humanity: www.vancouverhabitat.bc.ca/ and www.habitat.ca

Homeless Nation: www.homelessnation.org (the only website in the world created by and for the street community; it is a social network where all are welcome)

Homeless Hub (Toronto): www.homelesshub.ca

Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Gov of Canada: www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml

Impact on Community Coalition: <http://iocc.ca/> (impacts of 2010 Olympics)

Justice for Girls: www.justiceforgirls.org

Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness: <http://www.kamloops.ca/homelessness/index.shtml>

Luma Native Housing: <http://www.lnhs.ca/>

National Aboriginal Housing Association: www.aboriginalhousing.org

Pivot Legal Society: www.pivotlegal.org

Poverty net: www.povnet.org

Raising the Roof (Toronto): www.raisingtheroof.org

Spotlight On Mental Health: www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society: <http://surreyhomelessnessandhousing.org/>

Urban Native Youth Association: www.unya.bc.ca

Women in Search of Housing Society (WISHS): www.equalityrights.org/when/bc.html

Women's Housing Equality Network (WHEN): www.equalityrights.org/when/

NOVELS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Almost a Hero by John Neufeld

1995, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, New York, ISBN: 0-689-31971-1

Ben Derby's best friend in Santa Barbara, Felix Moldanado, calls him "Benny Banana." Felix thinks Ben is too good-natured to understand the world. But Ben is learning faster than Felix imagines, and not everything he learns makes him happy. Number One on this list is the fact that his entire spring vacation has been stolen from him in a class project, for he must choose in which community charity organization he will volunteer for that one week. Number Two because what he learns about Sidewalk's End, a day-care centre for children of the homeless in Santa Barbara, which for mysterious reasons he selects. Number Three is the fact that Jennie Johnson, whom he likes, likes him faster and more. Ben learns to work wonders with his young charges: Stephanie, whose history of abuse makes her shy away from all men; Wendell, who broods quietly and angrily; Batista, a budding world-class soccer player. But a little knowledge becomes dangerous as Ben comes face to face with "the system." Certain that he has seen Batista violently abused by his mother in a grocery store, Ben is frustrated that the system will do nothing to protect the child, and decides to take matters into his own hands. What follows is Ben's first big adult adventure. Pushed as much by the urge to rescue Batista from harm's way as by a foggy sense of something dark in his own past, he discovers that there are some things he can do to set things right, and some he cannot, no matter how caring or strong of heart he is.

The Beggars' Ride by Theresa Nelson

1992, Dell Publishing, New York, ISBN: 0-440-21887-x

Clare is alone and on the run in Atlantic City. She had to get away from her alcoholic mother and Sid, her mother's awful boyfriend. She wants to find Joey, her mother's ex-boyfriend, but he's gone, and so are Clare's last hopes. Now Clare has a chance to become part of a street gang of homeless kids who steal, sleep in rundown playgrounds and parking garages, scrounge for food, and keep running while trying to stay alive. The gang members – Cowboy, Thimble, Racer, Shoe, and Little Dog – took their names from the game of Monopoly. If Clare wants a name for herself, she must pass a dangerous test at Atlantic Jack's Hot Dog Place. Too bad Atlantic Jack was nice to her before. Clare has no choice but to accept the challenge and prove she is worthy.

Darnell Rock Reporting by Walter Dean Myers (for young teenagers)

1994, Delacorte Press, New York, ISBN: 0-385-32096-5

Thirteen-year-old Darnell Rock is not the kind of kid who would normally volunteer on a school newspaper – it sounds way too much like homework. But Darnell is being given one last chance by the principal to get his act together and make a positive contribution to South Oakdale Middle School. Although Darnell would much rather be hanging out doing nothing with his friends, the Corner Crew, he begins to get interested in the *Oakdale Gazette*. Much to his surprise, Darnell discovers that people pay attention to words in print – even words *he* writes. Before he knows it, Darnell finds himself changing from a kid who can't seem to do anything right to a person to whom people listen.

The Glass Castle: A Memoir by Jeanette Walls

2005, Scribner, New York, ISBN-10: 074324754X, ISBN-13: 978-0743247542

Jeannette Walls's father always called her "Mountain Goat" and there's perhaps no more apt nickname for a girl who navigated a sheer and towering cliff of childhood both daily and stoically. In *The Glass Castle*, Walls chronicles her upbringing at the hands of eccentric, nomadic parents--Rose Mary, her frustrated-artist mother, and Rex, her brilliant, alcoholic father. To call the elder Walls's childrearing style laissez faire would be putting it mildly. As Rose Mary and Rex, motivated by whims and paranoia, uprooted their kids time and again, the youngsters (Walls, her brother and two sisters) were left largely to their own devices. But while Rex and Rose Mary firmly believed children learned best from their own mistakes, they themselves never seemed to do so, repeating the same disastrous patterns that eventually landed them on the streets. Walls describes in fascinating detail what it was to be a child in this family, from the embarrassing (wearing shoes held together with safety pins; using markers to color her skin in an effort to camouflage holes in her pants) to the horrific (being told, after a creepy uncle pleased himself in close proximity, that sexual assault is a crime of perception; and being pimped by her father at a bar). Though Walls has well earned the right to complain, at no point does she play the victim. In fact, Walls' removed, nonjudgmental stance is initially startling, since many of the circumstances she describes could be categorized as abusive (and unquestioningly neglectful). But on the contrary, Walls respects her parents' knack for making hardships feel like adventures, and her love for them--despite their overwhelming self-absorption--resonates from cover to cover. --*Brangien Davis*

<http://www.jacketflap.com/bookdetail.asp?bookid=074324754X>

Gracie's Girl by Ellen Wittlinger

2000, Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, ISBN: 0-689-82249-9

It's bad enough that her mother gives all her attention to a community soup kitchen, but now Bess Cunningham's best friend Ethan, wants to volunteer there too. Bess has made so much progress in her attempt to gain popularity at her new middle school – she's got a wild new wardrobe and is working on the school play – that the idea of helping out seems lamer than ever. That is, until Grace Jarvis Battle comes into her life. Gracie is a sweet elderly woman who is not unlike Bess's grandmothers – except Gracie lives on the street and eats out of Dumpsters. Because of Gracie, Bess quickly becomes involved with the soup kitchen. When her mother spearheads an effort to establish a permanent shelter for women, Bess knows that this is the best way to help Gracie. But the shelter won't be ready until Thanksgiving. With it getting colder, Bess and Ethan try to help Gracie on their own. Will it be enough? In examining how homelessness can affect anyone, acclaimed author Ellen Wittlinger puts a human face to an all-too-common problem.

Homecoming by Cynthia Voigt

1981, Fawcett, ISBN: 0-449-70254-5 or Atheneum, ISBN: 0-689-86361-6

The Tillerman kids' mother just left them one day in a car in a mall parking lot. Their father, too, had left them a long time ago. So, as usual, it was up to thirteen-year-old Dicey, the eldest of four, to take care of everything, make all the decisions, feed them, find places to sleep. But above all, Dicey would have to make sure to avoid the authorities who would split them up and place them in foster homes. Deep down, she hoped they could find an adult they could trust, someone who would take them in and love them. But she was afraid it was too much to hope for....

The Leaves in October by Karen Ackerman (for younger readers, Grades 5-8)

1991, Atheneum, New York, ISBN: 0-689-31583-x

Kids grow up quickly when they live in a shelter for the homeless. That's what young Livvy learns when she finds herself in a city shelter with her father, "Poppy," and her little brother. After Poppy lost his job and their mother left, the family was forced to leave their mobile home, and their dreams, behind. There are many different kinds of people in the shelter – some scary and strange – but Livvy is brave and resourceful. She makes friends and finds a way to earn money on her own, believing Poppy's promise that they will have a home again by the time "the leaves in October turn red and gold." But there is a chance that Livvy and her

brother will live with foster parents. Though Livvy feels her father has broken his promise, she learns – and helps Poppy understand – that “home” is anywhere their family can be together.

Lullabies for Little Criminals by Heather O’Neill (Canadian)

2006, Harper Perennial, New York, ISBN-10: 0060875070, ISBN-13: 978-0060875077

Heather O’Neill dazzles with a first novel of extraordinary prescience and power, a subtly understated yet searingly effective story of a young life on the streets—and the strength, wits, and luck necessary for survival. At thirteen, Baby vacillates between childhood comforts and adult temptation: still young enough to drag her dolls around in a vinyl suitcase yet old enough to know more than she should about urban cruelties.

Motherless, she lives with her father, Jules, who takes better care of his heroin habit than he does of his daughter. Baby’s gift is a genius for spinning stories and for cherishing the small crumbs of happiness that fall into her lap. But her blossoming beauty has captured the attention of a charismatic and dangerous local pimp who runs an army of sad, slavishly devoted girls—a volatile situation even the normally oblivious Jules cannot ignore. And when an escape disguised as betrayal threatens to crush Baby’s spirit, she will ultimately realize that the power of salvation rests in her hands alone. <http://www.harpercollins.ca/books/Lullabies-Little-Criminals-Heather-Oneill/?isbn=9780060875077>

Shelter by Beth Cooley

2006, Delacorte Press, New York, ISBN: 9780385733304

Following her father’s death and the discovery of his debts, high school sophomore Lucy moves with her mother and brother from their upper-middle-class neighbourhood into a homeless shelter where she tries to come to terms with her new life.

Street Child by Berlie Doherty

1993, Hamish Hamilton, London, ISBN: 0-241-13058-1

Jim Jarvis is a runaway. Separated from his sisters and sentenced to the workhouse, escape seems the only solution. But London in the 1860s is a dangerous place. Just when Jim has found a shelter, he is snatched away to toil on a coal barge for Grimy Nick and his vicious dog, Snipe. Not all the people Jim meets are bad, however. He makes friends with another street child, Shrimps, and feels that he has found a brother to replace his lost sisters. But soon Jim is alone again. He desperately wants friendship and somewhere to live. At last his search leads him to the Ragged School and Dr. Barnardo. This gripping and moving novel is loosely based on the true story of Jim Jarvis, the orphan whose plight first inspired Dr. Barnardo to set up his famous children’s refuge.

PICTURE BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Even though picture books are typically written for very young children, they can be engaging and powerful for older students, and a great way to initiate discussion.

Broken Umbrellas by Kate Spohn

1994, Viking, New York, ISBN: 0-679-85769-6

This is the story of a street person, one you might meet on any day: An outsider, yet a part of our society. Painted in Kate Spohn’s vibrant oils, told in an unsentimental tone, it renders an indelible image of one woman – where she came from, why she became the way she is, and how, in many ways, she is not so very different from ourselves. This is a moving story with powerful illustrations.

December by Eve Bunting, illustrated by David Diaz

1997, Harcourt, Bruce and Company, San Diego/New York/London, ISBN: 0-15-201434-9

Simon and his mother are celebrating Christmas Eve in the cardboard house they built themselves. They have a tiny tree with just a few ornaments, a makeshift crèche, and not much else. But they still feel the spirit of

Christmas, and they offer to share the little they have with an old woman who has even less. Every so often, miracles happen. And on this magical night, Simon things he may have seen a miracle... Richly beautiful illustrations by Caldecott Medal winner David Diaz accompany Eve Bunting's moving story.

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ronald Himler

1991, Clarion Books, New York, ISBN: 0-395-55962-6

The only home Andrew and his dad have is the airport. "It's better than the streets," Dad says. "It's warm. It's safe. And the price is right." What Dad says is true. But still, Andrew hopes that one day life will be the way it used to be. Then he and his dad can have a place of their own again. This picture book by Eve Bunting and Ronald Himler is written and illustrated with the same spare honesty that distinguished their earlier collaboration, *The Wall*. It takes a topical problem and transforms it into a work of art.

Gettin' Through Thursday by Melrose Cooper, illustrated by Nneka Bennett

Lee and 1998, Lee & Low Books Inc, USA

Thursday, the day before payday, is always the hardest one for Andre's working-class single mother and the family. This story provides an important lesson in coping, creativity and true generosity

The Lady in the Box by Ann McGovern Ann, illustrated by Marni Backer

1997, Turtle Books, USA

Two young children befriend a homeless woman and learn the value of sharing and the essence of community.

Rosie, the Shopping Cart Lady by Martin Chia, illustrated by Jewel Hernandez

1996, Hohm Press, ISBN: 9780934252515

Rosie, a disheveled old woman who wanders the city streets collecting trash and treasures in her shopping cart, receives the gift of kindness from certain people she meets. This is a thoughtful, intimate story about a direct act of kindness from one human being to another. It includes a gentle introduction to homelessness, and how relationships can stretch across boundaries.

A Shelter in Our Car by Monica Gunning, illustrated by Elaine Pedlar

2004, Children's Book Press, San Francisco, ISBN: 0-89239-189-8

When her father died, Zettie and her mother left their warm and comfortable home in Jamaica for an uncertain future in the United States. Zettie's mother can't find a steady job, so they are forced to live in their car. But her mother's unwavering love, support, and gutsy determination give Zettie the confidence that, together, she and her mother can meet all challenges. Monica Gunning's moving and authentic story about homelessness in an American city and about the real lives of the people it affects is a milestone in children's literature. Elaine Pedlar's strong and lively illustrations bring the story even closer to the heart of the problem and to the heart of the reader, who will remember these two indomitable forces, Zettie and her Mama, for a very long time.

Space Travellers by Margaret Wild, illustrated by Gregory Rogers

1992, Scholastic Inc., New York, ISBN: 0-590-45598-2

Zac and his mother, Mandy, live in the big city without a home. For shelter they sleep in a rocket that stands in the middle of a park. Zac loves the rocket. At night he dreams he is zooming through outer space. One day Mandy has a surprise for Zac. They will be moving into a *real* house! Zac is so excited. But will he miss being a space traveller? Margaret Wild's sensitive portrayal of homeless life will help young readers better understand this very important issue.

Tess by H.J. Hutchins, illustrated by Ruth Ohi

1995, Annick Press, Toronto

Tess discovers her riches despite rejection, abject hardship, hunger and poverty.

Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

1991, Morrow Junior Books, New York

DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan`s sensitive text and pictures show a bustling, friendly group of workers who welcome the young narrator into the caring world of the soup kitchen as she deals with the problem of hunger at the level for children to understand.

We are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy by Maurice Sendak

1993, Harper Collins, ISBN: 006205015X

Sendak joins together two traditional nursery rhymes with illustrations depicting the plight and eventual triumph of orphaned and homeless children. With a benevolent moon as their guardian, Jack and Guy make their way out of the dumps, rescue a poor little kid with a black eye, and bring him home to triumph. In this, as in all his greatest books, Sendak speaks for children everywhere. They will recognize that what matters to him also matters, intensely, to them.

STREET NEWSPAPER

Megaphone Magazine, Vancouver`s Street Paper: <http://www.megaphonemagazine.com/>

POETRY

Hundred Block Rock by Bud Osborne (1999) (A book of poems about Vancouver`s downtown eastside)

Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC, ISBN: 1-55152-074-5 www.arsenalpulp.com

MUSIC

Arrested Development: *Mr. Wendal* (a song about a homeless man)

<http://www.arresteddevelopmentmusic.com>

Song <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyqp2f6VPos&feature=related>

Lyrics <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/arrested-development/mr-wendal.html>

Phil Collins: *Another Day in Paradise*

Song http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2327g_phil-collins-another-day-in-paradis_music

Lyrics http://www.lyricsfreak.com/p/phil+collins/another+day+in+paradise_20108035.html

FEEDBACK FORM

We'd appreciate receiving your feedback about this teacher's guide: how you found out about it, whether you used it and with what age groups and in which courses, what activities you did with your students, what you think about it.

Please email or mail your feedback to: Linda Sheldon, Project Manager, Metropolis British Columbia
Simon Fraser University
Department of Economics
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6
Email: linda_sheldon@sfu.ca

- In what school district and at what school do you teach?
- What grade(s) and subject(s) do you teach?
- How did you hear about this teacher's guide?
- With what grade(s) and in what subject area(s) did you use this resource?
- Which activities from this resource did you do with your students?
- With how many students did you do these activities?
- How did your students respond to the activities?
- Your comments about the resource:
- If you know of other lessons, teacher's guides or resources about homelessness, please share them. We can post them on our website.

Thank you for your time.