

# Poverty and Homelessness: Changing Perspectives

## EDUCATOR'S TOOLKIT

A resource package designed to assist educators in teaching students about poverty and homelessness

# Table of Contents

Introductory Note .....	1
The Mustard Seed .....	1
Let's Talk About Poverty and Homelessness .....	2
Lesson Plan.....	3
<b>Day 1. Poverty and Homelessness</b> .....	4
• Lesson Plan Grade 1 – 3 <Book: On Our Street> .....	4
• Lesson Plan Grade 4 – 6 <Book: The Table Where Rich People Sit >.....	5
• Lesson Plan Grade 7 – 9 <Video: What Is Poverty?> .....	5
• Lesson Plan Grade 10 – 12 <Book: Almost Home> .....	6
<b>Day 2. Causes of Poverty</b> .....	7
• Lesson Plan Grade 1 – 3 <Book: The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge> .....	7
• Lesson Plan Grade 4 – 6 <Book: The Lunch Thief> .....	7
• Lesson Plan Grade 7 – 9 <Activity: Make The Month> .....	8
• Lesson Plan Grade 10 – 12 <Video: Hidden Homeless>.....	8
<b>Day 3. Indigenous people and Poverty/Homelessness</b> .....	9
• Lesson Plan Grade 1 – 3 <Book: Whoever You Are>.....	9
• Lesson Plan Grade 4 – 6 <Book: Shi-shi-etko> .....	9
• Lesson Plan Grade 7 – 9 <Book: I Am Not A Number> .....	10
• Lesson Plan Grade 10 – 12 <Book: I Am Not A Number> .....	10
<b>Day 4. COVID-19 and Poverty/Homelessness</b> .....	11
• Lesson Plan Grade 1 – 3 <Book: What Do You Do With A Problem?> .....	11
• Lesson Plan Grade 4 – 6 <Book: What Do You Do With A Problem?> .....	12
• Lesson Plan Grade 7 – 12 <Video: Life on the Street Since Covid-19> .....	12
<b>Day 5. What Can We Do?</b> .....	13
• Lesson Plan Grade 1 – 3 <Book: Something Beautiful> .....	13
• Lesson Plan Grade 4 – 6 <Book: The Can Man> .....	14
• Lesson Plan Grade 7 – 12 <Activity: N.I.M.B.Y or Y.I.M.B.Y: You Decide>.....	15
<b>Appendix A – Educator Book List</b> .....	16
<b>Appendix B – Activity Resources</b> .....	16
<b>Appendix C – Online Resource List</b> .....	17

# Greetings from the Community Engagement Team at The Mustard Seed!

At The Mustard Seed we focus on Building Community, Growing Hope, and Supporting Change. While we primarily serve individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness, we are also passionate about transformative educational opportunities for young learners. It is our desire to come alongside schools and teachers to support classroom learning.

Our engagement opportunities have been thoughtfully designed to align with Alberta Education curriculum and to develop conversations around themes such as empathy, giving back to the community, stereotypes & stigma, and our role as engaged citizens. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic we are working creatively to find new, innovative ways of engaging with schools and homeschool families. We welcome your ideas, and if you see an opportunity to work with us, we'd love to start with a conversation.

Sincerely,

The Edmonton Community Engagement Team  
Kirsten, Hyeyoung & Jeremiah

## The Mustard Seed

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### A little bit about The Mustard Seed...

Our vision and mission are to eliminate homelessness and reduce poverty where we serve through open hands and the unconditional love modelled in the life of Jesus.

TMS was founded in downtown Calgary in 1984 and opened in Edmonton in 1988. Over the last 30 years we have expanded to include locations both in Alberta (Red Deer, Medicine Hat) and British Columbia (Kamloops).

TMS offers an expansive range of programs and services to our most vulnerable community by providing basic needs (food, clothing, and hygiene items), education, employment programs, health and wellness services, spiritual care, housing, and emergency shelter. At TMS, we care about the whole person – physical, mental and spiritual. We recognize that the root causes of poverty and homelessness are complex and diverse, and so we continue to grow with the needs of those we serve.

The parable of the mustard seed is a story that Jesus tells and is found in the Bible:

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field: it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Matthew 13:31-2*

Just as the tiny mustard seed grows into a great life-giving tree that provides shade and shelter, we believe that small acts of kindness and generosity can also grow to create and enable life change in the lives of our community members. The Mustard Seed has been an agent for change for more than three decades, thanks to our donors, volunteers, and support from the greater Edmonton community.

# Let's talk about poverty and homelessness...

## What is poverty?

"Poverty is... the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. Poverty in its various forms represents a barrier to communication and access to services as well as a major health risk." (United Nations World Summit on Social Development, 1995)

## What is homelessness?

There is no universal agreement on the definition of homelessness because it is not easily defined. People are at-risk of homelessness when their housing is unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate, or poorly maintained, and when they lack the support necessary to maintain stability in their lives. People experience hidden homelessness when they are living in temporary accommodations such as with family or friends. People experience absolute homelessness when they are staying in emergency shelters or sleeping in places not intended for livings (i.e., in cars, on streets, under bridges). (<https://cleoconnect.ca/organization/homelessness-and-housing-umbrella-group/>)

## Why do people experience homelessness?

Poverty is one of the main causes of homelessness. People who are without adequate housing, income and support are more likely to fall into homelessness. They do not have resources that help them to maintain stability in their lives following a catastrophic event like a car accident, illness or loss of employment (also known as "trigger events"). For others, it may not be so much a "trigger event" as a "tipping point", such as when the slow build-up of increasing debt, arrears and/or personal issues reaches a breaking point. Cultural issues such as systemic racism and intergenerational trauma also play a significant role in the disproportionate number of Indigenous people experiencing poverty and homelessness in Canada. People can avoid losing their housing by ensuring that where they live is affordable and by staying connected to the support they need to maintain stability in their lives. (<https://cleoconnect.ca/organization/homelessness-and-housing-umbrella-group/>)

## Who experiences poverty and homelessness in Edmonton?

Edmonton's 2019 municipal census recorded a population of 972,223. Of Edmonton's 375 residential neighbourhoods, 268 have a sufficient population to report low income prevalence. 24 Edmonton neighbourhoods had low income rates of 20% or above, with the McCauley neighbourhood being the highest at 30.4%. Lower income neighbourhoods are located in every quadrant of the city but with a concentration in the north central area. 38 Edmonton neighbourhoods count 3 in 10 or more children and youth living in low income, with Rundle Heights topping the list at 49.1% (1 in 2 children). (A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton, 2019)

According to the 2018 Point-in-Time Count, a total of 1,971 individuals experienced some kind of homelessness: 1,194 provisionally accommodated, 679 emergency sheltered, 70 unsheltered, and the remaining 28 had a housing status that was unknown. The majority of those experiencing homelessness were male (73.9%) and between the ages of 25 to 64 (77%), and 9% of the population were youth. 28-34% of the shelter population is Indigenous. (7 Cities on Housing & Homelessness, 2018)

## What is the impact of experiencing homelessness on adults and children?

Homelessness severely reduces an individual's quality of life. Studies have shown that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to die younger and have significantly poorer physical and mental health than their housed counterparts. The experience of homelessness for children also has many negative consequences including: poor health and nutrition; poor hygiene; low self-esteem; unwillingness to form relationships with peers; difficulty trusting people; short attention span; and aggression. Homelessness also presents significant barriers to school success for children. (<https://cleoconnect.ca/organization/homelessness-and-housing-umbrella-group/>)



## Poverty and Homelessness: Changing Perspectives

The Poverty and Homelessness: Changing Perspectives curriculum is designed to be effective in both classroom and homeschool settings. While each day's content builds on the previous day, each lesson may also be introduced and explored independently, and is approximately 30-45 minutes in length.

While we are based in Edmonton, Alberta, we have endeavoured to provide books, videos and activities that are applicable to any urban setting. Day 4, Gr.7-9 and 10-12 are exceptions to this, referencing both Edmonton and Calgary. Similarly, Appendix C provides resources for educators specifically in the Edmonton area; however, we anticipate that the resource list could be useful for educators in any location. We would also like to acknowledge and offer our thanks to the Calgary Community Engagement Team for creating the Educator Book List, which is foundational to the curriculum.

Day	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Subject Age Group	Poverty and Homelessness	Causes of Poverty	Indigenous People and Poverty/ Homelessness	COVID-19 and Poverty / Homelessness	What Can We Do?
Grade 1 to 3	Book: On Our Street	Book: The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge	Book: Whoever You Are	Book: What Do You Do With A Problem?	Book: Something Beautiful
Grade 4 to 6	Book: The Table Where Rich People Sit	Book: The Lunch Thief	Book: Shi-shi-etko	Book: What Do You Do With A Problem?	Book: The Can Man
Grade 7 to 9	Video: What Is Poverty?	Activity: Make the month	Book: I Am Not A Number	Videos: Life on the Street since COVID-19	Activity: N.I.M.B.Y. OR Y.I.M.B.Y.? You Decide
Grade 10 to 12	Book: Almost Home	Video: "Hidden Homeless"	Book: I Am Not A Number	Videos: Life on the Street since COVID-19	Activity: N.I.M.B.Y. OR Y.I.M.B.Y.? YOU DECIDE

# Day 1. Poverty and Homelessness

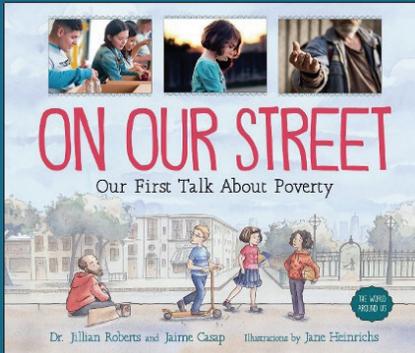
## Learning Outcomes / Goals

- Students understand that poverty is not simply lack of physical and material resources, but that it is also relational, emotional and spiritual.
- Students recognize different forms and various impacts of homelessness.

## Activities

### Grade 1 to 3

### Awareness of the world around us



### ABOUT

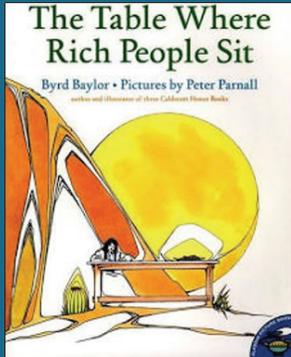
A gentle introduction to the issue of poverty, *On Our Street* Explores the realities of people living with inadequate resources. Using age-appropriate language, this book addresses mental illness, homelessness and refugee status as they are connected to this issue. Quotes from individuals and organizations such as UNICEF are included throughout to add further perspective on the issue.

1. Read *On Our Street*.
2. Engage students in a discussion of what “home” means to them. Surface questions such as:
  - a. What is a home?
  - b. What are some of the things in your home?
  - c. What makes a home special? Is it the building, the people, the belongings? Is it a feeling we get when we enter our home?
  - d. How do you feel in your home? Safe? Warm? Relaxed? Afraid?
  - e. Is it possible to have a home without walls and a roof?
  - f. When you go away on vacation, or are away from your home for a few days or weeks, what do you look forward to most about returning?
3. Extension (art project): After a discussion about what home means to your students, have your class draw pictures of what home means to them.
  - a. Have students label the different elements of their homes.
  - b. Instruct students to write a short paragraph (words or short sentences for younger kids) about what home means to them. Encourage them to think beyond the physical elements of their home and to think about the emotions, feelings and activities that are associated with or take place in their home.This project aims to encourage students to rethink conceptions of home and what the absence of a home could mean to a person who is homeless.

# Day 1. Poverty and Homelessness

## Grade 4 to 6

### The Table Where Rich People Sit



#### ABOUT

A young girl debates the argument of what makes you rich – money or the things around us like family, freedom, the nature that we see in our communities, friendship, etc.

They embark on a budgeting exercise to see just how rich they really are.....and the results are quite surprising!

1. Read *The Table Where Rich People Sit*.
2. Start a journal: List all the things that money cannot buy, e.g. fresh air, sunrises, friendship, and discuss all the ways that we are rich.
3. Make a budget: Assign student groups of 2-4 a limited amount of money and provide them with a list of things to purchase (rent, new clothes, groceries, a gift for a friend, new video game, etc.)
4. As students make difficult choices about their priorities, discuss how somebody could get help paying for rent or if they could access the food bank.
5. Ask students why they made the decisions they did, and discuss the different choices made by different groups.

## Grade 7 to 9

### Video: What is Poverty? - Jeremiah



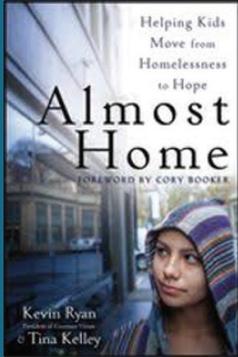
#### ABOUT

This video explores what poverty is through stories of the community of The Mustard Seed. It helps us better to relate to those living in poverty and homelessness and challenges the view that poverty is mainly the result of the lack of money.

1. Distribute the list of topical vocabulary words (Appendix B1, page 16) to students and have them define the words without using resources.
2. As a large group, have students share their definitions.
3. Watch the video 'What is Poverty?' (<https://theseed.ca/videos/WhatisPoverty.mp4>)
4. Distribute the list of topical vocabulary words with definitions (Appendix B2, page 16-17) and discuss with students how their original definitions of the words may have been wrong, and inquire as to why they thought certain words meant certain things. Eg. "Why did you define 'stereotype' as \_\_\_\_\_?"

# Day 1. Poverty and Homelessness

## Grade 10 to 12 Almost Home



### ABOUT

This book shares the stories of six young people from across the United States and Canada as they deal with life alone on the streets. These 6 children find their way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in USA and Canada.

1. Have students read *Almost Home*. (256 pages)
2. Discuss points of interest, new learnings, elements of the stories that were unsettling, challenging, etc.

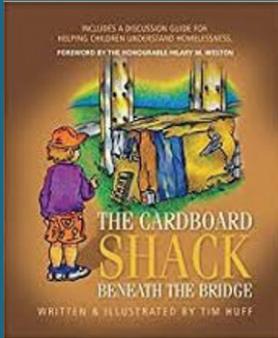
## Learning Outcomes / Goals

- Students begin to understand the complex web of interrelated causes of poverty.
- Students understand poverty can happen to anyone.

## Activities

### Grade 1 to 3

#### The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge



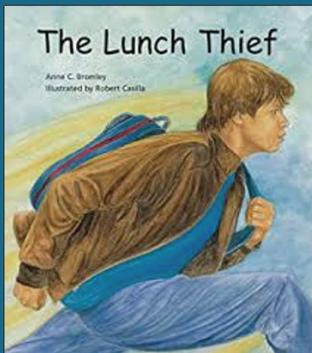
### ABOUT

A picture book that lays the groundwork for adults to enter in to conversations about homelessness, it's causes, and how students can help. Written in 16 stanzas, each accompanied by a colourful drawing, it gently raises questions in language a preschooler can understand and leaves it to the adult to decide where to take the discussion.

1. Before reading *The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge*, have students draw a picture or write about what kind of person might be homeless. What do they look like, think about, spend their time doing? What do they enjoy or dislike?
2. After reading this story, have students edit or add to their original work.

### Grade 4 to 6

#### The Lunch Thief



### ABOUT

Rafael Munoz is frustrated because his and his classmates' lunches keep getting stolen by Kevin Kopeck, the new kid. But, his mama told him, "Use your mouth before your fists." So, instead of getting angry, Rafael talks to Kevin and learns that he lost everything in the wildfires. Rafael shares his lunch with Kevin and gains a new friend.

1. Read *The Lunch Thief*.
2. Look through grocery flyers and discuss the cost of fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy.
3. Divide the class into three groups: one with a budget of \$20; a second with a budget of \$50; a third with a budget of \$80. Using these budgets, have each group construct three balanced meals for a family of 4 based on the Canada Food Guide (<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/>).
4. Connect with someone from The Mustard Seed Community Engagement Team via Zoom or in person to engage in a discussion about food insecurity, the Edmonton Food Bank, and why healthy foods can be difficult to obtain when you are without a home.

# Day 2. Causes of Poverty

## Grade 7 to 9 Make the Month



### ABOUT

A video interviewing individuals and families who have experienced homelessness, covering many life events leading to homelessness.

1. Watch the video. (stop at 06:22)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_iPWdJW3Bw&list=PLD6f2anyof-BkCJWq6St5Fg89ToyNjjJg&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_iPWdJW3Bw&list=PLD6f2anyof-BkCJWq6St5Fg89ToyNjjJg&index=5)
2. Divide students into groups of 2 to 4 people and play the 'Make the Month' game. <http://makethemonth.ca/>

## Grade 10 to 12 Get a Job



### ABOUT

For every one homeless person on the street, there are three who are Hidden Homeless. The Hidden Homeless can be found couch surfing with family, friends and often strangers. They can also be found filling hospital beds, fleeing domestic violence in motel rooms, attending treatment programs or serving a jail sentence. Today, there is an entire community of homeless people who are largely invisible to the public eye and government services.

1. Watch the video "*Hidden Homeless = Edmonton's Invisible Crisis*" \*this video touches on material from both Day 2 and Day 3 and could be divided into two ten-minute segments for viewing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmAKzIC7MkE>
2. Activity: 'GET A JOB!'  
While some people feel the solution to homelessness is to simply get a job, it isn't always just that easy. Employers are often reluctant to hire people without an address for fear that they might be transient, mentally unstable, or otherwise undesirable workers. These negative stereotypes also destroy the self-esteem of all people without homes, making it difficult for them to "sell" themselves.
  - a. Students will select one of the scenarios (Appendix B3, page 17), and adopt the role of the head of that household who is looking for a job. Using the classified ads, they will find a job suitable for a person with those skills.
  - b. Students will fill out the job application according to the skills and background that they have. Allow students to invent any missing details.
  - c. Have two students come to the front of the class to conduct an interview. One of them will role play an employer and the other, a prospective employee. The employer may want to ask the applicant about their background and experience in the field, past accomplishments, current residence, references, etc.
  - d. Have the students act out the interview as if it were real. Allow the employer final discretion as to whether or not she or he should hire this person, but give the audience a chance to vote as well.
  - e. Afterward, pair up students to have them conduct an interview on their own.
  - f. Follow-up: Discuss what might make it hard for someone who has lost their home to get a job. Did you feel the need to defend yourself? Did anyone lie or stretch the truth about their background?
  - g. Extensions: Have students choose a job that they are interested in, fill out a job application, and interview with another student who is the "employer." How does it compare with the previous interview? Is it easier or more difficult?  
(from <https://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>)

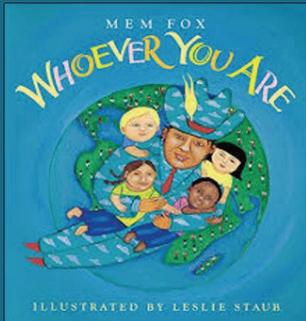
# Day 3. Indigenous People and Poverty/Homelessness

## Learning Outcomes / Goals

- Early elementary students gain an appreciation of the value of cultural diversity.
- Late elementary, junior high and high school students begin to deepen their understanding of the connections between the historical mistreatment and marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada and the correlation of poverty and homelessness in many of our Indigenous communities.

## Activities

### Grade 1 to 3 Whoever You Are

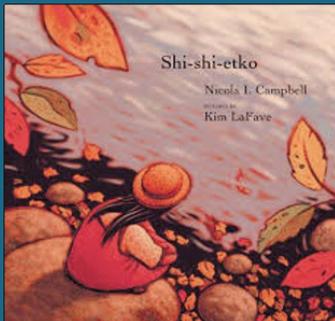


#### ABOUT

Every day all over the world, children are laughing and crying, playing and learning, eating and sleeping. They may not look the same. They may not speak the same language. Their lives may be quite different. But inside, they are all alike. Stirring words and bold paintings weave their way around our earth, across cultures and generations.

1. Read *Whoever You Are*.
2. Make a class VENN diagram and identify the following; Types of communities or groups students belong to and their similarities and differences, what helps us to recognize different groups or communities? In what ways do we belong to more than one group or community at the same time? In what ways do we benefit from belonging to groups and communities?

### Grade 4 to 6 Shi-shi-etko



#### ABOUT

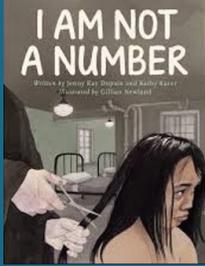
This vibrantly illustrated story tells of the last few days of Shi-shi-etko's time with her family, before she is sent off to residential school. She takes time to appreciate the natural world around her and also take in valuable teachings from her family.

1. Read *Shi-shi-etko*.
2. Discuss how being 'rich' is more than simply having money and possessions. Find specific examples from the book that describe what makes Shi-shi-etko's life rich (family, culture, nature, memories etc.). What are some things other than material possessions that make your life rich? What would you miss the most if you were sent away to school?
3. Talk about the universal nature of relational and spiritual poverty (specifically for Indigenous people who have been separated from their culture), and how it can affect each of us regardless of our material wealth.
4. Extension: Invite a community engagement coordinator from The Mustard Seed to engage with the class and play Poverty Jenga.

# Day 3. Indigenous People and Poverty/Homelessness

## Grade 7 to 9

### I Am Not A Number



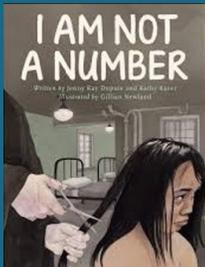
#### ABOUT

When eight-year-old Irene is removed from her First Nations family to live in a residential school she is confused, frightened, and terribly homesick. She tries to remember who she is and where she came from, despite the efforts of the nuns who are in charge at the school and who tell her that she is not to use her own name but instead use the number they have assigned to her. When she goes home for summer holidays, Irene's parents decide never to send her and her brothers away again. But where will they hide? And what will happen when her parents disobey the law?

1. Read *I Am Not A Number*.
2. Using stock photos or newspaper or magazine photos, have the students cut out or find pictures that can represent marginalized or disadvantaged individuals. Use this image as a starting point to build on the theme of self-identity, and discuss with the group what identity is: "What makes us who we are?" "What influences us?" "Who influences us?"
3. After asking the students to talk about their definitions of identity and influencing factors on their own identity, have the students reflect on the person in the picture. Ask them to think about that person's identity. They are homeless – not having a home, maybe not having a family, or friends. How does this affect their sense of identity?
4. Have students write short stories or paragraphs about the person's identity. The goal of this activity is for the students to realize that people who are homeless also have an identity, that they have feelings and emotions and that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. The theme for the stories could be titled, "I Am..." Encourage your students to think about different identifying elements of the person, such as the person's hopes, dreams, fears, ambitions, family, job, etc.

## Grade 10 to 12

### I Am Not A Number



#### ABOUT

When eight-year-old Irene is removed from her First Nations family to live in a residential school she is confused, frightened, and terribly homesick. She tries to remember who she is and where she came from, despite the efforts of the nuns who are in charge at the school and who tell her that she is not to use her own name but instead use the number they have assigned to her. When she goes home for summer holidays, Irene's parents decide never to send her and her brothers away again. But where will they hide? And what will happen when her parents disobey the law?

1. Read *I Am Not A Number*.
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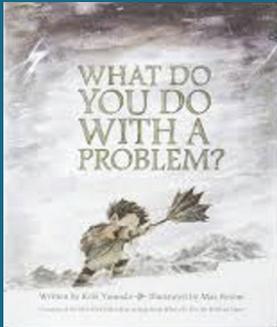
## Learning Outcomes / Goals

- Students understand the unique challenges that those who are experiencing poverty and homelessness encounter in a pandemic situation.

## Activities

### Grade 1 to 3

#### What Do You Do With A Problem?



#### ABOUT

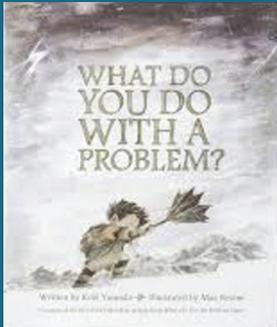
A unique perspective on identifying how a problem can seem so huge it threatens to swallow you up but when you tackle it, you may find a golden opportunity to learn and grow.

1. Read *What Do You Do with a Problem?*
2. The little boy felt like his problem might overwhelm him and swallow him up. Can you think of any problems that people who are homeless might feel are overwhelming?
3. What are some of the things in your home...that help you to feel better when you are sick?
4. What makes a home special...when we aren't feeling well? How do you feel in your home? Safe? Warm? Relaxed? Afraid? Do you have your own space? Is it possible to have a home without walls and a roof? If your home doesn't have a bathroom, where would you go to use the toilet? Have a bath? What if those places were closed because of Covid-19?

# Day 4. Homeless and COVID

## Grade 4 to 6

### What Do You Do With A Problem?



#### ABOUT

A unique perspective on identifying how a problem can seem so huge it threatens to swallow you up but when you tackle it, you may find a golden opportunity to learn and grow.

1. Read *What Do You Do with a Problem?*
2. The little boy felt like his problem might overwhelm him and swallow him up. Can you think of any problems that people who are homeless might feel are overwhelming? Can you think of any ways that COVID-19 might present new and different problems for people experiencing homelessness?
3. How has our city tried to help people who are homeless during the COVID-19 (overnight shelters, Expo drop-in centre, free transit, allowing tents in the river valley, etc.)?
4. What are some of the things in your home...that help you to feel better when you are sick?
5. What makes a home special...when we aren't feeling well? How do you feel in your home? Safe? Warm? Relaxed? Afraid? Do you have your own space? Is it possible to have a home without walls and a roof?...If your home doesn't have a bathroom, where would you go to use the toilet? Have a bath?...What if those places were closed because of Covid-19.

## Grade 7 to 12

### Life on the street since COVID-19



#### ABOUT

Many of Calgary's homeless have found something they fear more than not having a bed to sleep in at night – catching the COVID-19 virus. A walk through Calgary's downtown with a homeless outreach group on a drizzly night found clusters of people, hunkered down under bridges, behind restaurants, in doorways and across from the locked gates of the imposing Calgary Drop-In Centre.

1. Watch [https://youtu.be/6tgo\\_sCUjkM](https://youtu.be/6tgo_sCUjkM)
2. Have students discuss in small groups or as a class what an appropriate response or solution could be to help the city's homeless in the time of COVID. Is there one? How can a large group of people without homes stay safe from COVID 19?
3. Read <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton.edmonton-homeless-camps-covid-coronavirus-1.5580368>
4. Watch <http://homewardtrust.ca/homeless-amid-covid/>
5. Students write a short response on the temporary isolation shelters. Was this a good solution to help those experiencing homelessness? What issues or obstacles could have arrived from the isolation shelters? What happens when the isolation shelters close down?

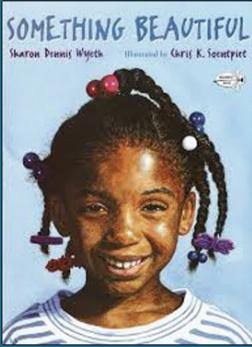
## Learning Outcomes / Goals

- All students develop a deeper empathy for those around them.
- Elementary students understand that small acts of kindness can make a big difference and that they can impact their community for good.
- Junior high and high school students begin to understand the tensions that exist in our communities specifically regarding housing for those experiencing homelessness.

## Activities

### Grade 1 to 3

### Something Beautiful



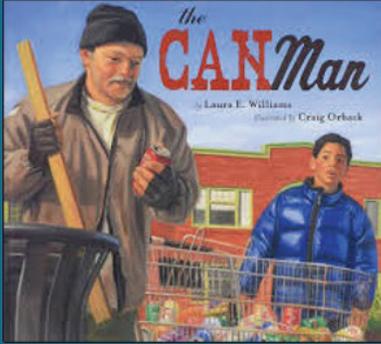
### ABOUT

A young girl looks around her home and community and sees trash and broken things, she yearns for something beautiful to make her feel happy. In talking to those in her community she discovers that beauty is all around and mostly within us!

1. Read *Something Beautiful*.
2. Talk about the sentence: "Beautiful – something, when you have it, your heart sings."
3. As a class do a mind map or spider diagram and write down all the things that make your hearts sing.
4. Have students draw a picture, write a paragraph or poem focusing on the one thing that makes their heart sing most. What things can they do in their lives to take control, and be powerful, to be proactive?

# Day 5. What Can We Do?

## Grade 4 to 6 The Can Man



### ABOUT

Tim decides to collect cans, like the Can Man, to make money for a new skateboard. He's almost at his goal when he learns a valuable lesson that changes him.

1. Read *The Can Man*.
2. Have students think about a recent conflict they had with someone. Ask them how they felt at the time and how they think the other person was feeling. Ask the students how the conflict could have ended differently if they had stopped to put themselves in the other person's shoes for a moment.
  - a. Would they have been able to come to an agreement or compromise?
  - b. Would they have been able to understand the other person's opinion or perspective in a different way?
3. Encourage students to share their experiences aloud to the class. Ask students what the benefits are to putting yourself in another person's shoes.
4. Ask the students to think about when it would be beneficial to put themselves in another person's shoes. Consider different situations with your class, such as:
  - a. The times we walk by someone sitting on the street, asking for money or for food, and we judge them...would it be helpful to stop for a moment and put ourselves in their shoes, to help us better understand them and help us not judge them?
  - b. What about the girl in your class who comes to school wearing the same t-shirt every day? If we stopped for a moment and put ourselves in her shoes, would we think before we laughed and made fun of her? Would we stop judging her and consider that perhaps her family doesn't have the money to afford clothes?
5. Distribute the activity sheets to your class. Ask them to fill in the shoes with situations when they could put themselves in someone else's shoes. Ask them to write about how seeing a problem, or a situation, or a person, from their viewpoint, could help them.
6. Select a few students to share their shoes with the class.
7. Extension: Recycle Project
  - a. Can your class collect cans and then use money for a donation?
  - b. What are some things you can recycle aside from bottles?
  - c. Can you collect gently used coats for the winter? What about gently used or new shoes and boots, hats, and scarves?
  - d. Plan and organize a supply drive to donate to an organization. Discuss how your contribution will help others.
  - e. Design fliers to advertise your project at school and in the neighborhood.
  - f. Write a letter to local businesses to ask for help (Grade 3 and Jr. High letter-writing curriculum).

## Grade 7 to 12

### N.I.M.B.Y. OR Y.I.M.B.Y.? YOU DECIDE



- Objective: Each group of students will defend a given position on a hypothetical affordable housing project.
- Materials: Writing paper and utensils for each student, scrap paper, copies of newspaper articles below.
- Method: Prepare slips of paper for each student as indicated in step #3, below.
- Articles/Resource Pages  
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7089697/southeast-edmonton-supportive-housing/>  
<http://homewardtrust.ca/>

1. Begin by discussing the term "affordable housing." What images come to mind? Is it needed? What is the 'Not In My Backyard' syndrome and how might it be a barrier to affordable housing? Discuss the fact that many people need affordable housing.
2. Ask students to imagine that an affordable housing project is planned in their neighborhood and give the following explanation: "I was speaking with the planning commission last night, and they told me that an affordable housing project was going to be built on \_\_\_\_\_ (name a street or neighborhood where many of your students live). A local non-profit agency has proposed to build an affordable residence for fifteen people who have lost their homes. A manager will be on-site twenty hours per week to help things run smoothly. The residents of this neighborhood are divided; many recognize the need to provide homes for people who cannot afford apartments in the area, but they do not want to have subsidized housing in their community. A public hearing will be held by the planning commission."
3. Hand out slips of paper designating students as "for the project," "against the project," or "Town Planning Commission" (three students who will decide on the project after they have heard each side). With older students, include their position in the community, i.e. business owners, politicians, people without homes, social workers, and have students defend the position of their assigned role. Have each group formulate and write a short argument.
4. Reread the scenario above, and have the planning commission conduct the hearing. Take testimony from students in turn, allowing for rebuttal, and have the commission make a decision based on what would be best for the town. Encourage negotiations and compromises.
5. Follow-up: Have students step out of their roles and give their opinions on whether the project should be built. Allow at least twenty minutes for discussion. Do people have a right to live in a certain community? What are facts about low-income people, and what are stereotypes? What if they cannot afford it? Should cities provide more affordable housing? What things could the town do to help the neighborhood be more supportive of this project?
6. Extensions: Contact The Mustard Seed housing team to learn more about housing developments for low-income people in Edmonton. This might include housing subsidies, senior housing, group homes, community care homes, or apartments with reasonable rents. How much do they cost? Do we need it? In our community? In our back yard?  
(from <https://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>)

## APPENDIX A – Educator Book List

Download The Mustard Seed Educator’s Book List (<http://theseed.ca/EDBookList.pdf>)

## APPENDIX B – Activity Resources

### B1 - Glossary of Topical Vocabulary Words

- Affordable housing
- Aging Out
- Belonging
- Citizenship
- Compassion
- Community
- Cost of living
- Couchsurfing
- Dignity
- Discrimination
- Empathy
- Equality & Equity
- Employment Insurance
- Eviction
- Gentrification
- Homelessness
- Homeless shelter
- Identity
- Panhandling
- Philanthropy
- Poverty
- Prejudice
- Quality of life
- Rent
- Resilience
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Social Justice
- Stereotype
- Stigma

### B2 - Glossary of Topical Vocabulary Words with Definition

**Affordable Housing** – housing for which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income from gross housing costs, including utilities.

**Aging Out** - refers to children within a provincial foster care system who are still in the system when they reach the age of majority or when they have graduated from high school. When children age out of foster care, they become ineligible to receive government assistance with housing, food, and medical care under the foster care system

**Belonging** – to be accepted as a natural member or part of something

**Citizenship** – the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen; the character of an individual viewed as a member of society; behaviour in terms of the duties, obligations, and functions of a citizen; an award for good citizenship

**Compassion** - a deep sympathy for the sorrows of others, with an urge to alleviate their pain

**Community** – a unified body of individuals

**Cost of Living** – the average cost of a variety of expenses for living, such as rent, transportation, insurance, utilities, etc.

**Couchsurfing** - stay temporarily in a series of other people’s homes, typically making use of improvised sleeping arrangements

**Dignity** - The quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect

**Discrimination** - Treatment or consideration based on class or category, such as race or gender, rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice

**Empathy** – the intellectual identification with or vicarious experience of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another

**Equality** - equal sharing and exact division

**Equity** - the qualities of justness, fairness, impartiality and even handedness

**Employment Insurance** – a system of income benefits based on hours worked in a year, earnings and previous use, and new employment benefits

**Eviction** – the forced removal of a tenant from occupation of a property

**Gentrification** - the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as an urban neighborhood) accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents

**Homelessness** – a situation in which a person does not have a permanent place of residence

**Homeless shelter** – places for people to stay temporarily when they otherwise would have to sleep on the street, similar to emergency shelters

**Identity** – the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another

**Panhandling** - to stop people on the street and ask for food or money

**Philanthropy** – altruistic concern for human welfare and advancement, usually manifested by donations of money, property, or work to needy persons, by endowment of institutions of learning and hospitals, and by generosity to other socially useful purposes

**Poverty** – the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support; condition of being poor; indigence

**Prejudice** – an unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought or reason

**Quality of life** – the degree to which intellectual, spiritual, economical, social and health pursuits are achieved and maintained

**Rent** – a regular payment by a tenant to a landlord for use of some property

**Resilience** - the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness; to be able to withstand and adapt to hardships, including trauma

**Respect** - esteem for or a sense of worth or excellence of a person, a personal quality or ability, or something considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability: e.g. " I have great respect for her judgement."

**Responsibility** – able to answer for one’s conduct and obligations

**Social justice** – a society which gives individuals and groups fair treatment and a just share of the benefits of society

**Stereotype** – a negative or limiting preconceived belief about a certain type of person that is applied to everyone in that group

**Stigma** - a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person

### B3 – Get a Job Scenario

Download the Get a Job Scenario document (<http://theseed.ca/EDScenario.pdf>)

## APPENDIX C – Online Resources

### Poverty and Homelessness

Homeless Hub - [www.homelesshub.ca](http://www.homelesshub.ca)

Edmonton - <http://endhomelessnessyeg.ca/>

Video: What to do if you see someone sleeping rough in Edmonton

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6388962/edmonton-homeless-sleeping-cold/>

### Mental Health & Supporting Students

<http://canwetalk.ca/>

### Indigenous Culture and Reconciliation

<http://empoweringthespirit.ca/>

### Covid-19

'Out in the Open': Homeless camps in Edmonton less hidden during the pandemic

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton.edmonton-homeless-camps-covid-coronavirus-1.5580368>

COVID-19 and people experiencing homelessness: challenges and mitigation strategies

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/192/26/E716>



[TheSeed.ca](http://TheSeed.ca)