

Poverty and Homelessness: Changing Perspectives

EDUCATOR'S TOOLKIT

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

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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 Calgary Community Engagement Team
Cecily, Caleb, and Dave

The Mustard Seed

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A little bit about The Mustard Seed...

Our vision is to eliminate homelessness and reduce poverty where we serve.

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 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 couchsurfing with family or friends. People experience absolute homelessness when they are staying in emergency shelters or sleeping in places not intended for living (i.e., in cars, on streets, under bridges) (Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group, 2009).

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. (Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group, 2009)

Who experiences poverty and homelessness in Calgary?

Calgary's 2019 municipal census recorded a population of 1,285,711. 104,000 people or roughly seven percent of Calgary's population are living under the poverty line, which is an income of \$40,207 per year (A Snapshot of Poverty in Calgary, 2019).

According to the 2018 Point-in-Time Count, a total of 2,911 individuals experienced some form of homelessness: 1,276 provisionally accommodated, 1,374 in emergency shelters, 59 unsheltered, and 202 in systems like hospitals or correctional facilities. The majority of those experiencing homelessness were male (72%) and between the ages of 25 to 64 (76%), and 18% of the homeless population were children/youth under the age of 24. 20% of those surveyed are Indigenous, though Indigenous peoples make up only 3% of the general population in Calgary. (Point-In-Time Count Report, 2018). We know these numbers are not accurate because they do not count the hidden homeless, who may be couchsurfing, may leave town the night of the count, or may be in the suburbs where volunteers cannot interview them. We estimate that the number of people experiencing homelessness in Calgary is closer to 6,000.

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.



A Note on Language...

Person-first language

Throughout The Mustard Seed, our staff try their best to use person-first language. This means that we will talk about *people experiencing homelessness* rather than *homeless people*. We use this language to signify that we value all people, and that individuals are not defined by their situation.

For example, those of us who are housed rarely would identify as a “housed person” and likewise we choose not to identify those who are not housed by their living situation.

Another example: “*people* live in homeless shelters” not “homeless people live in shelters.”

Person-first language emphasizes the person and their humanity over their situation. It also acknowledges that homelessness is a temporary experience for most people—they have not always been without a home, and they won’t be without a home forever. Though people experiencing homelessness may use a variety of terms to describe themselves, our aim is to always use the most respectful and kind language we can in any given situation.

While we use person-first language at The Mustard Seed, it is common in our society to use the term “homeless person.” We’re all on a learning journey and changing our language of habit is a not an overnight process. While we encourage you to share person-first language with your students, we recognize that this decision is personal; however, we discourage the use of more pejorative terms such as hobo, bum, or street people.

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 30minutes – one hour in length.

While we are based in Calgary, Alberta, we have endeavoured to provide books, videos and activities that are applicable to any urban setting.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	Poverty and Homelessness	Poverty and Homelessness cont.	Indigenous People and Poverty/ Homelessness	COVID-19 and Poverty / Homelessness	What Can We Do?
Grade 1 to 3	Book: On Our Street	Book: Still a Family	Book: Whoever You Are	Book: What Do You Do With A Problem?	Book: Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed
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	Activity: Get a Job	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

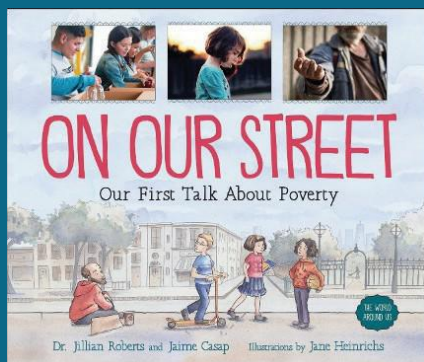
Learning Outcomes / Goals

- 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

On Our Street



ABOUT

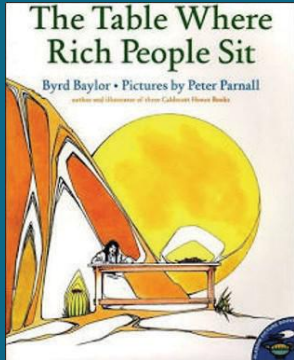
A gentle introduction to the issue of poverty, *On Our Street* explores the realities of people living with inadequate resources. Using age-appropriate language, this book addresses mental illness, homelessness and refugee status as they are connected to this issue. Quotes from individuals and organizations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

1. Read *On Our Street* by Jillian Roberts & Jaime Casap, illustrated by Jane Heinrichs
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 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 experiencing 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* by Byrd Baylor, illustrated by Peter Parnall
2. In their journals, have students list all the things that money cannot buy, e.g. fresh air, sunrises, friendship, and discuss all the ways that we are rich. What amount of money do you think those things worth? Add up suggestions from your class and see how rich you are.
3. Practice budgeting using The Mustard Seed's Choices Activity (appendix B1)
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. Evaluate what they gain and what they might miss out on based on their choices.
5. Have students write in their journals which choices they made and why.
6. Allow time for students to share their decisions with the class and discuss together the pros and cons of various choices.
7. Discuss resources in Calgary for people living in poverty (see appendix B2)

Day 1. Poverty and Homelessness

Grade 7 to 9

Video: What is Poverty?



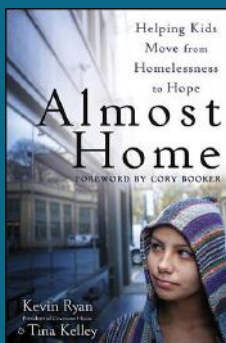
ABOUT

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 B3) 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://drive.google.com/file/d/1OHBcZMbd1XhGFmu7x96BR6ObwE1xxBoD/view>)
4. Distribute the list of topical vocabulary words with definitions (Appendix B3) and discuss with students how their original definitions of the words may have been wrong. Inquire as to why they thought certain words meant certain things. Eg. "Why did you define 'stereotype' as _____?"

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*.
2. Discuss points of interest, new learnings, elements of the stories that were unsettling, challenging, etc.

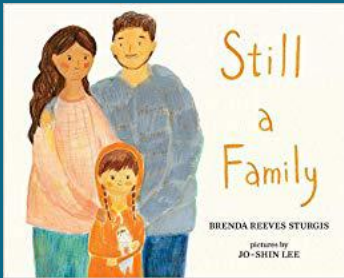
Day 2. Poverty and Homelessness Cont.

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 Still a Family



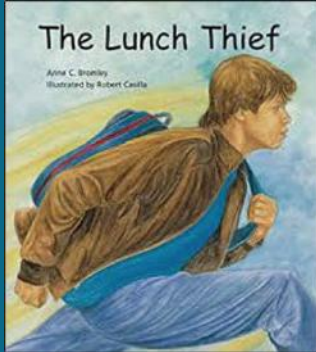
ABOUT

A family are split and live in 2 separate shelters (women and children, and one for men) and the little girl shares how even though they may be apart, they are still a family. The family begins the story living in separate shelters, and finishes the story still living in shelters. So many stories want to have “happy endings”, to “fix” things for their characters, but for most families struggling with poverty there are so easy fixes, and things don’t change overnight. By not changing the family’s situation, *Still a Family* reinforces the message that living in a shelter is nothing to be ashamed of, and that life carries on, no matter where you live.

1. Before reading *Still a Family*, 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. Ask: Does this person have a family? What’s their favourite food? What do they like to do for fun? Encourage students to think about people experiencing homelessness as complex people with hopes, dreams, preferences, and personality.
3. Research shelters in Alberta. There are many places in our province where families must split up in and stay in separate shelters. Thankfully, there is an organization called Inn From The Cold in Calgary that provides shelter to anyone who has a child with them. This could be grandparents with a child, a single mom with a child, or even an adult sibling taking care of a younger sibling.
4. Learn more about Inn From The Cold [here](#)

Day 2. Poverty and Homelessness Cont.

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* by Anne C. Bromley, illustrated by Robert Casilla
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/>). Use the Superstore website to find products & pricing.
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 Calgary Food Bank, and why healthy foods can be difficult to obtain when you are without a home.
5. Additional books to explore:
 - ***Maddi's Fridge*** (link) by Lois Brandt, illustrated by Vin Vogel
 - ***Emma and the Food Bank*** (link) by Sue McLure, illustrated by Val Lawton (\$10 at the Calgary Food Bank)

Day 2. Poverty and Homelessness Cont.

Grade 7 to 9 Causes of Homelessness



ABOUT

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

1. Watch the video [here](#). (stop at 06:22)
2. Discuss the causes of homelessness using the chart below. Are there any factors that students don't understand or need to learn more about?
3. Divide students into groups of 2 to 4 people and play the 'Make the Month' game. <http://makethemonth.ca/>
4. Discuss the challenging decisions each group had to make. What was the hardest part? How did this activity help build understanding and empathy for those who are living in poverty?

HOW DOES A PERSON END UP BEING HOMELESS?

Every person experiencing homelessness has a unique story to tell. Most of them include one or more of the following factors that led them to become homeless:



Source: Causes of Homelessness: Homeless Hub



ABOUT

For every person experiencing homelessness on the street, there are three who are considered the 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. It is also difficult to get a job without access to a computer to apply, or a cell phone to receive a call about an interview. Brainstorm with students any other barriers someone might face while trying to find work.
 - a. Students will select one of the scenarios (Appendix B4), 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>)

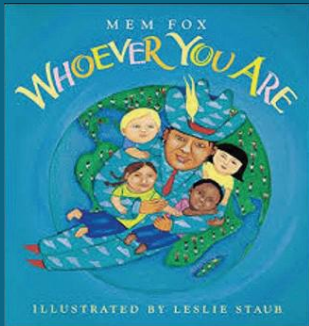
Day 3. Indigenous People and Poverty/Homelessness

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 Indigenous communities.

Activities

Grade 1 to 3 Whoever You Are



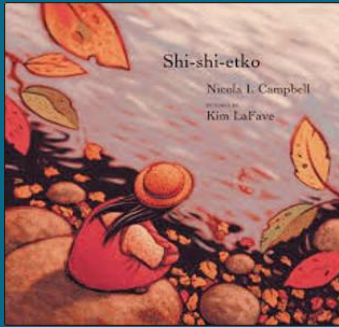
ABOUT

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* by Mem Fox, illustrated by Leslie Staub
2. Discuss the concept of community. What does community mean? See community mapping lesson plan in appendix B5
3. 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?

Day 3. Indigenous People and Poverty/Homelessness

Grade 4 to 6
Shi-shi-etko



ABOUT

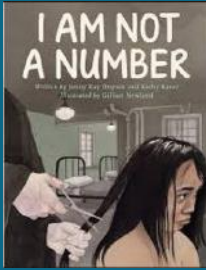
This vibrantly illustrated story tells of the last few days of Shi-shi-etko's time with her family, before she is sent off to residential school. She takes time to appreciate the natural world around her and also takes in valuable teachings from her family.

1. Read *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell, illustrated by Kim LaFave
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. What are ways people might face spiritual or relational poverty?
 - A disconnection from culture or tradition
 - Not having family or friends close or available to talk to/help, or being taken away from family
 - Feeling lonely or isolated, invisible or misunderstood
 - Being looked down upon or bullied
 - Being disconnected from the community

Indigenous People and Poverty/Homelessness

Grade 7 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* by Jenny Kay Dupuis & Kathy Kacer
2. Discuss the idea of identity with the class. Ask: What makes us who we are? What influences us? Who influences us? How do you define your identity? How do identity and belonging connect?
3. Using stock photos or newspaper or magazine photos, have the students cut out or find pictures that can represent people experiencing homelessness. 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, friends, or community. Perhaps they have been disconnected from their culture like those who were forced to attend residential schools. How could 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.
5. Extension: Book some time with an Indigenous Elder through the Calgary Public Library to share in history, stories of the land, culture, and guidance. Email indigenousservices@calgarylibrary.ca or call 403.801.6084 to book a time.

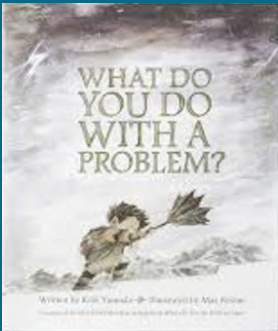
Learning Outcomes / Goals

- 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

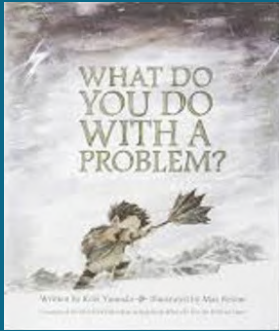
A unique perspective on identifying how a problem can seem so huge it threatens to swallow you up but when you tackle it, you may find a golden opportunity to learn and grow.

1. Read *What Do You Do with a Problem?* by Kobi Yamada
2. The little boy felt like his problem might overwhelm him and swallow him up. Can you think of any problems that people experiencing homelessness might feel are overwhelming?
3. What do you do when you are feeling sad, frustrated, angry, or overwhelmed? What are some of the things in your home that help you to feel better when you are sick or sad?
4. What would you feel like if you didn't have a safe and warm home to go to, or friends and family to talk to? What if you didn't have anywhere to go to be alone and feel calm again? Write about how you would feel, or perhaps draw a picture of you trying to carry all your feelings alone. Now write or draw how it would feel or look to have community around you to help.

Day 4. Homelessness 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?* by Kobi Yamada
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. Read newspaper articles to learn more: how has our city tried to help people who are homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What are some of the things in your home that help you to feel better when you are sick? How can giving people homes be a solution to the problem of COVID-19? What makes a home special? What is important in a home?
5. Design thinking challenge: Using a template or grid paper, design a tiny home (300 sq. ft. or less). What is important to include? What things do you have at home that are important to you? What kind of feelings would you like this home to give someone? What are wants vs. needs when working with a small space?
 - Extension: Using loose parts and craft supplies, build a model of your tiny home

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
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://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/corbella-calgary-church-becomes-a-homeless-shelter-during-covid-19>
4. Have students research responses from other shelters and write a paragraph or paper about their opinion of the response to COVID-19 from shelters in Calgary. What do they think will happen as the pandemic continues? What are other options or solutions? What would they do if they were making the decisions?

Day 5. What Can We Do?

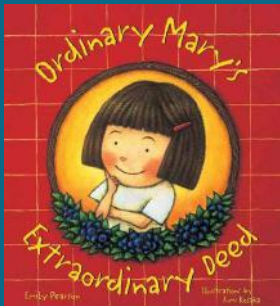
Learning Outcomes / Goals

- 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

Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed



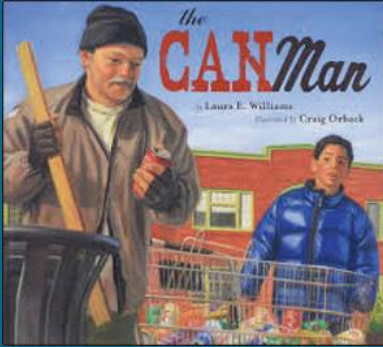
ABOUT

A delightful tale of a young girl who does a good deed which travels and impacts the lives of everyone around her and in her community. Her deed goes full circle and teaches us about the good in “paying it forward.”

1. Read *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson, illustrated by Fumi Kosaka
2. Discuss the kind actions that people did for one another in the book. Practice math skills by multiplying by 5 as far as you can, like the diagram at the end of the book.
3. As a class, brainstorm all the kind things you can do for others at school, at home, and in your community.
4. Have students trace their hands in their journals and then write down a kind action in each finger/thumb that they will commit to doing in the coming week or two
5. Encourage students to discuss with their families later in the day about what they would do if they saw someone experiencing homelessness panhandling (asking for money/food/resources). Would they give a gift card? Money? Give some mittens? Could they smile and say hello? Perhaps direct them to an agency that can help? Discuss the many options as a class and prompt students to have a conversation with their families over dinner. Follow up the next day with a discussion in class about what students decided together with their families about their “action plan.”

Day 5. What Can We Do?

Grade 4 to 6 The Can Man



ABOUT

Tim decides to collect cans like the Can Man does 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* by Laura E. Williams, illustrated by Craig Orback
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. Complete the "Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes" activity sheets (see appendix B6)
6. Select a few students to share their shoes with the class.
7. Extension: Recycling 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.
- Read the following article:
 - <https://globalnews.ca/news/7089697/southeast-edmonton-supportive-housing/>

1. Begin by discussing the term “affordable housing.” What images come to mind? Is it needed? What is the NIMBY (“Not In My Backyard”) attitude and how might it be a barrier to affordable housing? Discuss the reasons why someone might need inexpensive housing (working at a minimum wage job, not being able to work because of an injury/illness/disability, paying for expensive medications that take up a lot of a person’s paycheck, etc.)
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 (e.g. 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 the 1010 Centre Permanent Supportive Housing building and how The Mustard Seed provides homes and supports to those in need.

Activity from <https://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>

APPENDIX A – Educator Book List

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

APPENDIX B – Activity Resources

B1 – Choices Activity

Download the choices activity here:

B2 – Resources for People Experiencing Homelessness and/or Poverty in Calgary

<https://www.ihearthomeyc.com/homeless-serving-agencies-in-calgary/>

B3 - 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
- Privilege
- Quality of life
- Rent
- Resilience
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Social Justice
- Stereotype
- Stigma

B3 - 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

Privilege - a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.

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

B4 – Get a Job Scenario

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

B5 – Community Mapping Activity

Download the community mapping lesson plan here:

B6 – Put Yourself in Someone Else’s Shoes Activity – TPT

Purchase this digital download from Teacher’s Pay Teachers here:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Empathy-Put-yourself-in-someone-elses-shoes-5969338>

APPENDIX C – References & Online Resources

Homelessness:

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.cmaq.ca/content/192/26/E716>

Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group, 2009

https://eea19aa7-65e8-4c89-8ee4-03e3f4333fee.filesusr.com/ugd/000487_124c0137d52442528d230980dabd785d.pdf

Unsheltered Lives - All ages

Lesson plans to talk about homelessness with K-12 students

<http://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>

Alberta Point in Time Homeless Count (Stats) - All ages with adaptation

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/2018-alberta-point-time-homeless-count>

Homeless Charter of Rights (Social studies - Rights & Freedoms)

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/homeless-charter-rights>

Video: What to do if you see someone sleeping rough in Calgary - Grade 5+

https://globalnews.ca/news/6387196/calgary-homeless-sleeping-in-the-cold/?fbclid=IwAR3abVfzea_8ivVpfNT0IPorpeaumQrURC9gUqBtQ06eRLe6C84nFcX9g9c

Talking About Homelessness Teacher Toolkit - Elementary/Jr. High

Lesson plans to help students in grades 1-8 begin to think about homelessness

<https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/q2ebqzb3.pdf>

Podcast: 99% Invisible on Defensive Architecture - Jr High/HS

<https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/unpleasant-design-hostile-urban-architecture/>

Video: The Homeless Read Mean Tweets - Jr High/HS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biuRrMdefFs>

Video: The Faces of Homelessness - Grade 9+

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_iPWdJW3Bw&list=PLD6f2anyof-BkCJWq6St5Fg89ToyNjjJg&index=5

TRDC Curriculum/Teaching Guide - High School

Some content specific to Ontario, but lots of great suggested readings and content

http://tdrc.net/resources/public/TeachingGuide.htm#_Toc110076615

Street Stories - High School

Example of Sr. High drama students and short vignettes made depicting homelessness, based on well-known fairy tales

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/street-stories>

United Nations World Summit on Social Development, 1995

<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/text-version/agreements/poach2.htm>

Website/Research Project: Policing Homelessness in the Pandemic - Jr. High/High School

Includes an interactive map showing which activities (panhandling, loitering, etc.) are illegal in which parts of the country.

<http://covid19-phi.ca/index.html>

More information about each category here:

[https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/mapping-vagrancy-type-offences-municipal-laws?utm_source=Homeless+Hub+Newsletter&utm_campaign=3e33ec90d0-](https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/mapping-vagrancy-type-offences-municipal-laws?utm_source=Homeless+Hub+Newsletter&utm_campaign=3e33ec90d0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_07_21_03_28&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_dbc0a7bb5b-3e33ec90d0-416632489)

[EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_07_21_03_28&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_dbc0a7bb5b-3e33ec90d0-416632489](https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/mapping-vagrancy-type-offences-municipal-laws?utm_source=Homeless+Hub+Newsletter&utm_campaign=3e33ec90d0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_07_21_03_28&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_dbc0a7bb5b-3e33ec90d0-416632489)

Poverty:

A Snapshot of Poverty in Calgary, 2019 Vibrant Communities Calgary

<http://enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/A-Snapshot-of-poverty-in-Calgary-in-2019.pdf>

Make the Month Activity - Jr/Sr. High

United Way budgeting & empathy-building online activity

<http://makethemonth.ca/>

For Richer For Poorer: A Tale of Two Schools

An interesting look at two schools in Calgary - a private school for the upper class, and a school in Calgary's East end where many parents are the working poor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZliNRsfJ2w>

Food Security Quest - Grade 5/6+

Choose your own adventure style game to learn about food security

<https://www.ryerson.ca/openlearning/projects/food-security-quest/play/>

Privilege:

Create Your Own Privilege List Activity - Jr/Sr. High

<http://www.socialjusticetoolbox.com/activity/create-your-own-privilege-list/>

Mental Health & Supporting Students:

Can We Talk? - All ages

Mental health lesson plans & resources, and strategies for building a compassionate classroom

<http://canwetalk.ca/>

Open Up: It's all in your viewpoint - Elementary

Mental health & perspective-taking exercise for primary students

<https://healthsmartva.pwnet.org/uploads/rteeditor/file/Open%20Up%20-Its%20All%20In%20Your%20Viewpoint%20Lesson.pdf>

Video: Beyond the Label: Social Experiment - Jr/Sr. High

A video that touches on stigma surrounding mental health

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQoiz4wfV_c

Natural Supports Simulation: Helping students who are dealing with anxiousness, sadness, or self-harm - For Educators

<https://naturalsupportsyc.com/>

Indigenous Learning:

Indigenous Culture and Reconciliation

<http://empoweringthespirit.ca/>

Niitsitapiisini Teacher Toolkit

https://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/teacher_toolkit/index.html

Orange Shirt Day Resources

<https://www.orangeshirtday.org/teacher-resources.html>

Video: Water: The Sacred Relationship short

<https://www.sacredrelationship.ca/>

Grade 5 & 6 science curriculum that ties in:

<https://www.sacredrelationship.ca/teach-about-water/>

Other:

Video: The Power of Empathy (Brene Brown) - All ages

Short, animated video about the difference between sympathy and empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10>

TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story - Grade 5/6+

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en#t-1110035

Fitting In vs. Belonging Activity - Jr high/HS

<http://www.socialjusticetoolbox.com/activity/fitting-in-vs-belonging/>

TEDtalk: Does Money Make You Mean? - Jr. High/HS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJ8Kq1wucsk>

Article & CBC Radiocast:

APPENDIX C – Ways to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness

From HHUG Teacher Toolkit [PDF]. (2009). Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group.

Common Characteristics of Children Experiencing Homelessness

While the population of school-aged children experiencing homelessness is varied, there are some characteristics which are observed frequently in this population. Some signs of a child experiencing homelessness may include:

- Poor health, nutrition, and hygiene
- Low self-esteem
- Unwillingness to form relationships with peers and difficulty trusting people
- Short attention span
- Aggression

Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education

- Frequent moves and school changes can cause gaps in knowledge and repetition of material. It can also lead to wrongful diagnoses of abilities.
- Children may be bullied and teased by their peers.
- Children may have difficulty completing homework due to crowded living conditions and a lack of necessary resources (e.g., markers).
- Emotional and behavioural issues (e.g., aggression) can be barriers to school success for children experiencing homelessness.

Strategies for Promoting School Success

- Assess literacy immediately to ensure that instruction is at appropriate level.
- Adjust assignments to accommodate limited shelter resources and crowded living conditions.
- Plan for the next transition immediately. Create a parent folder with important documents to take to new school.
- Allow students to keep their possessions nearby and do not take away belongings as a disciplinary measure.
- Welcome all students into your classroom and create a class climate of acceptance and understanding.
- Provide a structured, predictable routine and refrain from rearranging the classroom furniture too often.
- Separate tasks into meaningful parts and don't assign too much work that takes place outside of school hours.

Ways to Support Parents/Guardians Experiencing Homelessness

- Refer parents/guardians to community resources
- Communicate regularly regarding student's school performance.
- Solicit suggestions for how to best accommodate the student's living situation (e.g., materials to provide to shelter).

Please contact the Community Engagement department for more information about local resources and supports for families in need.



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