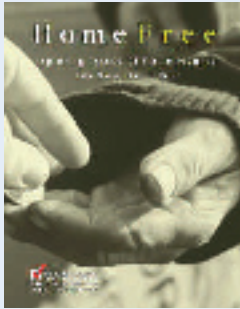


An excerpt from *Home Free:*
**Exploring issues
 of homelessness**



BY ANITA DHAWAN AND RACHELLE MARSAN

"I ask you and myself, can we morally, ethically and economically allow homelessness to become the 'norm' in Canadian life?"

Christopher Bognat in *Homelessness: A Message for Working Canadians*

1. *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control.*
2. *Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 Article 25, Proclaimed by the United Nations General
 Assembly on December 10, 1948.

Actions We Can Take to Eliminate Homelessness

- Acknowledge homelessness as an important social issue
- Educate yourself and others by reading research literature
- Attend meetings, vigils and special events arranged by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) and other community groups
- Interact with homeless people on the street
- Volunteer in a shelter or agency working to end homelessness
- Write letters demanding politicians' commitment to the issues
- Challenge stereotypes wherever you encounter them
- Participate in National Housing Day, November 22. For schoolwide activities, go to tdrc.net
- Talk to your students about homelessness. Use picture books in the Bibliography of Picture Books and Novels on pages 32 and 33. They will serve as a springboard for initial discussion on homelessness issues. These books can be used from kindergarten to grade 8. One of the ways might be to use these books as a read-aloud and have open discussion, accepting all answers. Be vigilant of stereotypes and myths and take those teachable moments to provide facts.

Some of us will have students in our classrooms who are homeless. As you discuss homelessness with your students, be aware of this and be sensitive to the effect you might be having on them. Although we have listed some resources, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee has an extensive list of books, websites, videos, research facts, and articles, plus a list of speakers available on their website, tdrc.net.

Suggested Activities – Grade 4 to Grade 6

(These activities can be adapted for both older and younger students)

Synopsis

This topic focuses on the concept of homelessness. The students imagine themselves without a home and begin to explore what the immediate and long-term needs of the homeless might be. They consider and challenge stereotypes of homelessness and look toward solutions.

Materials

LM2 “Home Free/Si j’avais un foyer,” paper, tempera paint, brushes, strips of paper, chart paper, markers

Curriculum Expectations

Choices into Action (Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools)

Interpersonal development	In grades 1 to 6, students will learn to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• self-management• getting along with others• social responsibility• self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– demonstrate their understanding of socially acceptable responses to a variety of situations in school– identify the variety of characteristics, skills, competencies, qualities, and talents of others– demonstrate their understanding of using skills to build positive relationships at school (e.g., co-operating with others)– demonstrate their understanding of “being a responsible citizen” in the classroom and the school
Career development	In grades 1 to 6, students will learn to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– identify their personal interests, strengths, competencies, and accomplishments



Grade 4 students will:

The Arts

Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences

Language

Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

Grade 5 students will:

The Arts

Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences

Language

Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

Grade 6 students will:

The Arts

Visual Arts

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences, using a variety of familiar art tools, materials, and techniques

Language

Oral Communications

- listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes
- use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

Writing

- generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

Source: Ministry of Education. *The Ontario Curriculum*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario

Science and Technology, Grades 1–8. (2007).

The Arts, Grades 1–8. (2006).

Language, Grades 1–8. (1997).

Social Studies, Grade 1–6. (2004).

History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8. (2004).

Lesson Outline

1. **Show students** a backpack and tell them that they should imagine that they have five minutes to pack everything they would need if they were suddenly homeless. With a partner they should make a list of the necessities. Only items that fit in a backpack can be included.
2. **Have the students record** all the activities they do at home after they leave school until they return the next day. The next day they will share their lists with a partner. Ask the students to decide which of these activities would be difficult or impossible without a home. Then ask the students to imagine that they are a homeless child. Discuss with a partner what kinds of problems they might have. Examples: They wouldn't have a phone so they could not call friends or be reached easily; they could not invite their friends over; it might be difficult to be clean because they would not have a shower; they may not have enough to eat, no school supplies, enough sleep, etc.
3. **Have the students write** a journal entry about what it would be like not to have a home: "Without a home ..." The students should consider where they would go, how it would feel, what they would miss.
4. **Hand out strips of paper** and ask students to write three different sentences about the homeless: "Homeless people are ..." Discuss the meaning of the word *stereotype*. Have students share their sentences and decide whether the sentences are true or stereotypes.
5. **Introduce students** to opinion papers. Each student will complete an opinion paper on the topic, "Homeless people should not be allowed to sleep/live in public places." Have students formulate their thoughts (introduction, opinion, evidence to support the opinion, and conclusion) and prepare arguments.

6. **Debate.** Separate the students into small groups based on whether they agree or disagree and have them debate the topic “Homeless people should not be allowed to sleep/live in public places.”
7. **Read the poem** “Home Free/Si j’avais un foyer” LM2. Discuss as a class whether those things would really help the homeless. Discuss that although these things are necessary in the short term, they do not address the long-term needs of the homeless.
8. **Divide the class into groups.** Allow each group to read the poem and practise one verse. Read the poem together, with each group presenting their verse.
9. **Ask students** to provide a definition of the word *stereotype*. A stereotype is an overly generalized image of a particular person or group. It may be positive or negative. Stereotyping assumes uniformity within the group. What stereotypes exist about the homeless? Ask students to brainstorm the reasons for homelessness. Share these as a class and compare with the list provided.
- Why might someone become homeless?
- Not enough money
 - No job
 - Mental illness
 - Natural disaster (i.e. fire)
 - Family violence
 - Alcohol and drug addiction
10. **Think/Pair/Share.** Make a list of things that could be done to help the homeless in the long term. Share ideas with a partner. As a class, create an action plan. Encourage the students to make a plan to help the homeless. This may include organizing a coin drive or a clothing drive.
11. **Create posters to educate others.** Display these throughout the school.

Assessment

Teachers may choose to use the LM1 At-a-Glance (page 8 of *Home Free*) provided, which includes some “Hints for Teachers” to guide observations and help to determine appropriate student responses based on the lesson expectations.

Support for Every Learner

Teachers should consider, when forming the groups, that students’ strengths need to be promoted.

Home Connection

Students will complete lists of activities that are carried out at home.

LM2 Home Free

If I had a home and you did not
 I would look for you when winter came
 I would look in all the places you might go
 If I found you
 I would wrap you up
 In thick, clean blankets
 That smell like Spring
 And bring you tea
 If you wanted me to
 I would help you find a place where you felt safe
 If you were afraid I would stay with you
 I wouldn’t tell you anything
 Of what to do
 Or where to go
 I would listen
 I would look at you
 Past what others see
 I would look at you
 The wonder
 That is you
 And I would let you tell me how to help you
 But I do not have a home

Rachelle Marsan

LM2 Si j’avais un foyer

Si j’avais un foyer et toi sans foyer
 Je te chercherais dès l’hiver venu
 J’t chercherais partout où tu pourrais te trouver
 Et si je te trouvais
 Je t’envelopperais d’épaisseurs de chaleur
 Au parfum printanier
 Je t’apporterais du thé
 Si tu le souhaitais
 Je t’aiderais à trouver un endroit
 Où tu serais en sécurité
 Si tu avais peur je serais restée avec toi
 Je ne te dirais rien
 Ni quoi faire
 Ni où aller
 Je t’écouterais
 Je te regarderais
 Je verrais en toi
 Ce que les autres ne voient pas
 Je verrais en toi
 La merveille qui est toi
 Je te demanderais
 De me dire comment t’aider
 Si j’avais un foyer
 Mais je n’en ai pas

Rachelle Marsan

Translated by **Kathy Wazana**