

User Guide

Home Safe Hamilton is part of SkyWorks' *Home Safe Series*, a documentary project filmed in several Canadian cities that deals with children and families who are living with the threat and reality of homelessness. *Home Safe Hamilton* examines some of the systemic roots of homelessness as a consequence of economic restructuring, discrimination, and displacement. It includes stories of steelworkers affected by industrial layoffs, high school students living in poverty, new Canadians, and Aboriginal families. The film also shows how families, communities, and service providers are working hard to support and advocate for families who are facing poverty and homelessness.

Screen the entire film or select individual chapters using the DVD scene selection menu. You will find chapter descriptions, running times, and ideas for discussion below.

Introduction (3 mins.)



- What image comes to mind when you think of people who are homeless?
- Do you ever think of families with children as being homeless?
- What factors could cause a person or family to become homeless - factors that are not the fault of that person or family?

Once a thriving industrial town, Hamilton and the surrounding region are now grappling with the economic impact of de-industrialization. In this brief introduction we meet some of the families featured in the film – all of whom have experienced forms of displacement that have left them vulnerable to poverty and insecure housing.

Shannon and the Steelworkers (17 mins.)



- Why are working families facing homelessness?
- What impacts do corporate and government policies have on poverty and homelessness?
- How does financial stress or precarious housing affect family members and family relationships?
- Can collective action and a strong sense of community lead to social change?

When a big U.S. company bought Stelco, a Canadian steel manufacturer, it broke its promise to preserve Canadian jobs by laying off workers and moving business to its U.S. plants. **Shannon** and co-workers are organizing a rally to mark the one-year anniversary of being "lock out". We hear stories of families who are now facing unexpected financial crisis, emotional stress, and the threat of homelessness.

Good Shepherd Family Centre (11 mins.)



- What kinds of housing challenges do refugees face?
- What is it like to live in a family shelter?
- How can housing shelters play a positive role in helping families who are in crisis?

The Good Shepherd Family Centre offers a positive model of how communities can provide supportive shelter services to families in crisis. Two refugee families from Latin America tell us how this support has been critical in helping them to establish themselves in Canada.

Shamso and the Somali Community (16 mins.)



- What barriers do immigrants face in trying to obtain safe, affordable, and adequate housing?
- What actions can immigrants take to help themselves and others in their community?
- How can police, politicians, and the wider community help?

Hamilton is one of the largest centres for newcomer families in Canada. **Shamso** tells her story of immigrating to Canada to escape civil war in Somalia and her struggles to obtain stable and adequate housing for herself and her seven boys. She has become an advocate and interpreter for other Somali families, who tell us about exploitation by landlords and show us their terrible living conditions in the private housing market.

Tuyet and Ynhi: Students Speak Out (10 mins.)



- How are young people affected by poverty and homelessness?
- How does stigma affect how they see themselves, and how other people see them? Why is it important to speak out, and speak up?
- How can educators and schools help students and their families who are financially stressed?

Sir John A. MacDonald Secondary School is in the poorest area of Ontario, however most of the students are silent about this issue. Two young women, **Tuyet** and **Ynhi**, tell us about their own struggles to survive financially and to find affordable housing. To help students living with poverty, the school has set up a breakfast program and an S.O.S Centre offering clothing, snacks, school supplies, and other essentials to students who cannot afford them.

Florence & Amy: Two Aboriginal Communities (27 mins.)



- What kind of housing challenges do Aboriginal people face both on and off reserve?
- What impact did European colonization have on Aboriginal peoples in North America, and how has this history led to many of the problems that Aboriginal people face today?
- How are Aboriginal communities helping to provide safe and affordable housing to their members in need?
- Should housing, food, and decent jobs be seen as human rights?

We see the efforts being made by two Aboriginal communities to meet the housing needs of their members. **Amy Lickers**, the community planner at the Six Nations reserve west of Hamilton, tells us about the history of colonization and displacement which underlies many of the housing and social problems that exist today in her community. In Hamilton, **Florence** and her three girls have found safe and affordable housing, thanks to native non-profit housing and the support of the wider native community.

Home Safe Hamilton Total Running Time: 86 mins.

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