



“I love my human rights” series:

Guy Felicella’s story

Classroom conversation guide: Grades 10–12

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to assist classrooms from grades 10–12 to explore themes in BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner’s (BCOHRC) [“I love my human rights” video series](#). The video series uses storytelling as a tool to help personalize complex human rights concepts and encourage empathy and action. In Guy Felicella’s video, he shares his experience of substance dependence, the importance of access to housing, health care and support services and what it means to be an advocate.

To consider in planning the activity

Conversations about substance use, discrimination and human rights abuses can be difficult, emotional and even triggering for some participants. Please consider that some students will have lived experience with substance use, substance dependence, housing insecurity and the toxic drug crisis. Please also consider the nature and extent of misinformation students will have been exposed to about these topics. Use BCOHRC’s [Human Rights Conversations Support Document](#) and the Resource section of this guide for assistance with planning.

Concepts covered

Core concepts in the video include substance use, overdose and substance dependence; physical and verbal abuse; foster care; housing insecurity, poverty, stigma and discrimination. If students are not familiar with these topics, allocate sufficient time to introduce these to them and/or provide opportunities for deeper learning. Resources to help introduce and/or deepen learning on these topics are listed at the end of this conversation guide.

This discussion guide will also mention human rights and B.C.’s *Human Rights Code*. If students are not familiar with the Code or human rights concepts, allocate sufficient time to introduce these concepts. BCOHRC has developed learning resources to help introduce students to human rights and B.C.’s *Human Rights Code*. These resources are listed at the end of this conversation guide.

Pre-viewing activity

Take a few minutes to brainstorm what participants know about substance use, substance dependence and homelessness in British Columbia. What are these issues about? How are they showing up in your community? What are some of the potential solutions that they have heard raised by politicians, medical professionals and community organizations?

Viewing the video

Use the closed captioning and transcript options to assist students.

Open the conversation

Choose a few of these questions that will work with your students. Begin with questions that will ease students into the conversation in an emotionally safe manner.

- Did you find anything surprising in Guy's story? Did you learn anything new? Was there a particular moment in the video that stood out to you?
- Sometimes learning about the discrimination that people have experienced can bring up strong emotions. What feelings did you experience while watching the video?
- In the video, Guy says that simple slogans "[can] not solve complex challenges." What does he mean by that? Do you agree?
- Guy talks about being in "survival mode" as a teenager experiencing substance use, incarceration and housing insecurity. How did being in "survival mode" affect him and his future? What were some of the things that helped him change his life as an adult?
- Guy talks about "connection" being an essential part of his recovery. Can you list the connections that he mentioned in the video that were important to him in that journey?

Deepen the conversation

Choose a few of these questions that will work with your students.

- Before watching the video, had you heard people who have lived experience of homelessness and substance dependence share their stories or share their opinions about possible solutions on TV, online or in the news? Whose voices do you hear most on these issues? How do you think that shapes our understanding of these issues? Do you think it's important to hear from people with lived experience when trying to develop solutions to complex social problems? Why or why not?
- Human rights are the basic rights that every person has from the day they are born. Those human rights don't stop if someone uses substances or is experiencing poverty or



homelessness. When you think of homelessness or substance dependence issues in your own community, how often do you hear these framed as human rights issues? What does it mean to discuss things from a human rights perspective? How do you think discussing these issues from a human rights perspective might change the narrative?

- In the video, Guy says that everyone deserves access to housing. He goes on to say that having access to housing is essential for people to create a new life. What do you think the connection is between being housed and substance use or dependence?
- In the video, Guy talks about access to health care and its impact on substance dependence. What do you think he means by this? Does everyone in B.C. have equal access to health care?
- Often addiction and homelessness are framed as personal issues rather than structural or systemic issues. What do you think? Do you think these are systemic issues, personal issues or both?
- Misinformation can shape the way we understand important topics, including important human rights topics, like substance dependence and homelessness. Misinformation can also fuel discrimination by promoting stereotypes, harmful attitudes and dehumanizing ideas. Sadly, misinformation about people experiencing homelessness and substance dependence is very common. Recognizing misinformation is an important skill that you can practice. For example, ask yourself: What did I know about these topics before watching the video? Where did the information come from? Who shared the information? Do other reputable sources share the same information? Did it try to simplify a very complex problem? Did it provoke strong feelings like fear or anger in you or others? Did it dehumanize anyone or share harmful stereotypes? Asking questions like this can help you spot misinformation and be sure that you are getting accurate, reliable and safe information.
- Often substance use and homelessness are portrayed as criminal problems. Guy's story, on the other hand, shows us that they can be understood as systemic human rights issues. How does a criminal law approach try to solve homelessness and substance dependence in B.C.? How might a human rights approach look different from a criminal approach?

Learning more

Choose from these questions and/or resources below to guide continued learning or discussion.

- Design a poster, infographic, social media post or short video that teaches your peers about one of the following:
 - the community services available to teens in your community
 - the negative impact of stigma associated with substance dependence and homelessness



- the impact that language can have on the way we understand homelessness and/or substance dependence (for example, substance use disorder/addiction, person with a substance use disorder/addict, in treatment/clean)
- non-stigmatizing language to use when talking about issues of homelessness and substance use
- how equitable access to housing and health care are human rights issues in British Columbia
- People experiencing homelessness and substance dependence experience systemic discrimination in British Columbia. That means that the barriers and harms that they face are baked into the way our systems, like housing, health care and education function. Sometimes it is difficult for people to recognize systemic discrimination, especially if they do not experience it themselves. Do some research on systemic discrimination and create a short slideshow introducing systemic discrimination to someone who may not have heard of it before.
- Misinformation can shape the way we understand important topics, including important human rights topics like substance dependence and homelessness. Misinformation can also fuel discrimination by promoting stereotypes, harmful attitudes and dehumanizing ideas. Collect news articles, social media posts and/or city council meeting minutes that talk about people who use drugs and homeless encampments. Where does this information come from? Who shared the information? Are there other reputable sources that share similar sentiments? Do the articles treat individuals with dignity and care? Can you spot fearmongering or bias in the articles and posts? Do they use a criminal approach or a human rights approach?
- The discrimination that people experience in one system, like health care, is closely related to discrimination they face in other systems, like housing or criminal justice. For example, over two-thirds (69 per cent) of participants in B.C.'s 2023 point-in-time homeless count reported multiple health conditions, including acquired brain injuries (33 per cent) and physical disabilities (41 per cent).¹ In B.C., about 60 per cent of incarcerated people have a mental health or substance use disorder.² What are the connections between these issues? Do some research on the connection between systemic discrimination, substance dependence and homelessness and create an infographic that helps people understand the link between them.

¹ Homelessness Services Association of BC et al., *2023 Report on Homeless Counts in BC* (BC Housing, 2024), <https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2023-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf>.

² Government of British Columbia, *Profile of BC Corrections* (Government of British Columbia, 2025), 10, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/corrections/reports-publications/bc-corrections-profile.pdf>.



Bring the conversation to a close

Choose from the options below to conclude your discussion.

- Invite students to revisit the list they co-created as a pre-viewing activity. Is there anything new that they have learned that they would like to add to the list? Are there things they would like to remove?
- Have students summarize some key ideas and values that were shared in the discussion that reflect a recognition of and commitment to a human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness and substance dependence in British Columbia.
- It's important to process what we learn and are exposed to, especially when ideas might be new to us. Have students identify and share one thing they learned that they didn't know before; one thing that they already knew; one thing they would like to learn more about; and any questions they may still have.

Resources

To learn more about:

Planning and facilitating human rights conversations:

- BCOHRC's [Human Rights Conversations Support Document](#)

Human rights and how they are protected in B.C.:

- BCOHRC's [Introducing Human Rights](#)

Systemic discrimination:

- BCOHRC's resources on [systemic discrimination](#)

Misinformation:

- BCOHRC's Misinformation campaign: [Can You STOP It?](#)

Guy Felicella:

- Visit his website guyfelicella.com

BCOHRC's focus on the right to the highest attainable standard of health and the toxic drug crisis:

- [Right to the highest standard of health](#)
- [A human rights-based approach to the toxic drug crisis](#)



BCOHRC's focus on the right to adequate housing:

- [Beyond the headlines: Housing and human rights](#) – A candid conversation between Commissioner Govender and Federal Housing Advocate Houle about navigating the housing crisis while keeping human rights in focus (2024)
- [Responding to homeless encampments](#) – Encampment brief (2024)
- [Kasari Govender: We need to talk about encampments](#) – Vancouver Sun Op-ed (2023)
- [Human rights of the unhoused must be respected when removing tent city encampment](#) – Media release (2022)

Substance use:

- [Health Canada information on substance use](#)
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)
- Health Canada [Stigma: why words matter](#)
- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [Stigma](#)

Housing:

- [Aboriginal Housing Management Association](#) (specifically: [IYHS](#) , Indigenous Youth Housing Strategy for youth by youth)
- [Homelessness Services Society of BC](#)
- [BC Housing](#)
- [The Federal Housing Advocate | Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [A Way Home Canada](#)
- [Housing First for Youth](#)

Support services for youth in B.C.:

- [Foundry Centres](#)
- [Integrated Child and Youth teams](#)
- [Youth Services | QMUNITY](#)
- www.kuu-uscisline.com (youth line 250-723-2040)
- [YOUTH IN BC](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#) (Text CONNECT to 686868)
- [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#)
- HelpStartsHere.gov.bc.ca/Youth
- [Youth Supporting Themselves](#)

Videos about human rights:

- [Video series - BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner \(bchumanrights.ca\)](#)

