

Films on Homelessness and Related Issues

A) VANCOUVER AND BC FILMS

SHORT FILMS

HomelessNation.Org: HN News and other shorts (Vancouver)

The Vancouver branch of Homeless Nation, a national website for and by the homeless (www.homelessnation.org), produces regular short videos on issues related to homelessness.

To see one of the HN News episodes: <http://homelessnation.org/en/node/12956>

For a list of all the posted videos: <http://homelessnation.org/en/featuredvideos> (includes one with Gregor Robertson in June 08 <http://homelessnation.org/en/node/12552>)

List of Homeless Nation shorts provided by Janelle Kelly (jkelly.homelessnation@gmail.com)

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/5610>

Powerful video in response to a friend's suicide

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/5018>

Not a youth video but a powerful piece on social housing in partnership with CCAP

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/4789>

Victoria and Vancouver video on homelessness from last year

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/6902>

Youth speak out about their views on harm reduction

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/13110>

Not on homelessness but amazing. Fraggie did this entire piece.

<http://www.homelessnation.org/node/12691>

H/N news first episode

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/6492>

Not a youth video but really good characterization of life on the streets

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/5896>

Washing away the homeless 'yuppie falls'; what some business do to prevent homeless

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/7211>

Story of two youth that left Vancouver, they explain their experiences

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/12755>

Video of an SRO

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/7324>

Song a homeless youth wrote about his brother's addiction

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/7894>

Nathan talks about his strengths, transferable skills and how things could be different

Misconceptions of the Downtown Eastside – (Vancouver) (Sam Herman, Mark Harrison, Assis Brioschi-Serrano, high school students at Prince of Wales Secondary School, Vancouver)

<http://www.yayem.com/video/751/mas-videoflv>

Stophomelessness.ca website (Vancouver) (2008)

There are 5 short films (each 4-6 min long) at the Metro Vancouver's Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness website:

<http://stophomelessness.ca/learn-more/videos/>

Digital Story Telling, SHIRE (The Seniors' Housing and Isolation Response Experience)

(Vancouver) (2008)

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/12517>

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/13115>

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/12539>

<http://www.homelessnation.org/en/node/13110>

Hollow - (Vancouver) (5 min)

About a guy living in a hollow stump in Stanley Park. This guy's story has many elements that are often part of the homeless story, succinctly delivered.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AttUQYAcuBY

Stories of Strength - (Vancouver)

this is a moving piece about the value of secure housing in peoples' lives. From Vancouver Coastal Health, this video features the personal stories of three individuals dealing with the challenges of a mental illness and/or an addiction and the support they receive from friends and family. It brings a human face to mental illness and addiction and to remind us that by focusing on strengths and abilities, people can live full and happy lives in a place that is understanding and welcoming.

<http://www.vch.ca/mental/>, <http://www.vch.ca/mental/docs/strength.mov>

The Open Door (probably 10 years old) The producers Asterisk Productions in Victoria (<http://www.asterisk.bc.ca/index.htm> under recent work)

Their description: A video about a Victoria drop-in centre [Open Door] that offers a safe haven and a sense of family.

A short film about Open Door (now Our Place) in Victoria offers a good insight in about 12min about the real people who use a shelter like that, and how they contribute back in.

Hide and Go Homeless - (Victoria) (2004)

"In September 2004, as part of a pre-employment program, a handful of young people with no previous experience set out to make a documentary film about poverty and homelessness in Victoria. All of the filmmakers faced particular issues in their lives that made securing employment difficult. Coordinated by a social worker who had no filmmaking experience outside of a one-week crash course, these youth created an emotionally and politically charged film that challenges the way society and government portrays and addresses the issue of homelessness and poverty."

<http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/1105>

http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/6848&dossier_nid=1105#

Bruce: The filmmaker is in Kitimat now I believe but still making subject-involved social justice films, his latest on teen female body image

Roderick Taylor, maskremovalproductions@telus.net (250) 635-3225

LONGER FILMS

Something to Eat, A Place to Sleep and Someone Who Gives a Damn - (Vancouver) (2008) (Les Merson and Ken Villeneuve)

This documentary explores the homeless epidemic in metro Vancouver by putting a face to homelessness and giving a voice to the homeless and those who work with them. It is a film filled with hope. Find out how you can make a difference.

<http://www.streamsofjustice.org/2008/10/something-to-eat-place-to-sleep-someone.html>

http://www.streetnewsservice.org/index.php?page=archive_detail&articleID=3551

Down Here – (Vancouver) (2008) (30 min) (Charles Wilkinson)

Beautifully filmed in the heart of "the best city in the world," *Down Here* tenderly explores the day-to-day survival of the growing ranks of urban castaways. Candid interviews reveal struggles for basic needs in this seemingly post-apocalyptic environment.

<http://www.viff.org/tixSYS/2008/filmguide/eventnote.php?notepg=1&EventNumber=1517>

The Way Home – (Vancouver and BC) (2008) (50 min) (Kevin Fitzgerald and Louvens Remy)

NDP Homelessness critic David Chudnovsky is releasing a film about homelessness in B.C. Chudnovsky, along with some young filmmakers and his ever-present office manager Kate, crisscrossed B.C. to visit various communities and investigate the homelessness situation. Their findings made a splash when Chudnovsky announced there are now [over 10,000 homeless](#) in B.C. The movie version of their tour will be previewed in Woodlands Park on June 20, and should be, barring rain, a very interesting exposé on

the depth to which the homelessness problem has penetrated the province. It's like the pine beetle problem, and it just coincidentally has [the same minister](#) in charge of it.
<http://www.povnet.org/node/2775>

Out in the Cold – (Vancouver) (?) (2008) (30 min) (Colleen Murphy)

On a freezing night, Soft as Snow and Cold as Ice meet Thomas, a drunken young man who is dumped by police on the outskirts of town. Will Thomas join his elders or return to the city to tell his story? This oftentimes humorous and important story was inspired by the freezing deaths of several First Nations men, which put Canada on Amnesty International's list of human rights abuses.
<http://www.viff.org/tixSYS/2008/filmguide/eventnote.php?notepg=1&EventNumber=1122>

Carts of Darkness – (North Vancouver) (2008) (60 min) (Murray Siple)

In the picture-postcard community of North Vancouver, local bottle pickers have turned the act of binning into a thriving subculture of shopping cart racing. Murray Siple, a former snowboarder and sport film director injured in a serious car accident ten years ago, returns to filmmaking to capture their story in the documentary *Carts of Darkness*. Shot in stunning high-definition and featuring tracks from Black Mountain, Ladyhawk, Vetiver, Bison, and Alan Boyd, of Little Sparta, *Carts of Darkness* borrows the cinematic language of extreme sports films to capture the risk and intensity of life lived on the very edge. National Film Board of Canada: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=53834>

Broken Down – (Cowichan Valley, BC) (2008) (Harold Joe)

Local filmmaker Harold C. Joe's gritty, compassionate and important film "Broken Down", a story of homelessness in the Cowichan Valley, chronicles his four-day journey spent living on the streets and visiting the seedy, dope-soaked underworld of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Harold's aim was exposing why folks become homeless and how drugs and alcohol keep them that way. His own experiences were both tough and touching and his surprise at how hard it really is to live the exposed life of the homeless added personal truth to the gritty reality of the story. His concern for the area's homeless found a fine point following the tragic death of Paul Francis James, who had been living in a makeshift shed near downtown Duncan when it burned down. The deliberately set fire, which also maimed another man, spurred public outcry. *"It was quite an eye-opener. I knew two people personally. So it really interested me. It's [homelessness] a serious ongoing problem. It upset me to see different official people passing it around, not doing anything. I thought it would be really worthwhile to go out and do a documentary and get the story."* The premiere of Broken Down packed the 731-seat Cowichan Theatre turning away over 200 people. As a result of the sellout debut a second screening was scheduled drawing another near-sellout crowd. In addition to raising awareness of homelessness in the Valley, Broken Down raised over \$6,500 which Harold donated to Warmland House, Cowichan's three-story homeless shelter and transition house scheduled to open in August 2009.
<http://www.visionkeeper.ca/Broken.htm>

Giant Leap – (Vancouver) (60 min) (Florence Debeugny and Lynsey Hamilton)

From early 2005 up to mid 2007, local filmmakers Florence Debeugny and Lynsey Hamilton kept a video record of some of the dramatic physical and social changes in Vancouver's booming Downtown South neighbourhood. Their hour-long documentary *Giant's Leap*, coproduced by the two women, bears witness to the demolition of many of Yaletown's older residential buildings, and the dispersion of the little communities that evolved within and around them.
<http://www.straight.com/article-118376/news-from-hollywood-north>

Toughing it Out – (Vancouver and Montreal) (Helene Pichette)

Federal Government tries to shutdown Vancouver's controversial heroin safe-injection site, ***Toughing It Out*** investigates another controversial treatment program in Vancouver that provides free heroin to addicts. In Canada, there's only one way to treat heroin addiction: methadone. But it doesn't fit every addict's needs. After several European countries successfully concluded their research, doctors here in Canada decided to begin a trial: treat heroin addicts with heroin. The idea is to stabilize addicts, get them off the streets and into a decent place to live, and eventually get rid of their heroin addiction. The year-long program is called NAOMI: The North American Opiate Medication Investigation. ***Toughing It Out*** follows the intimate stories of three people, Gary and Jane in Vancouver, and Sylvain in Montreal.

Viewers will witness the lives of these heroin addicts, who have struggled to be part of society. But even for the ones who qualify to become part of the medical trial, life is not so easy. They have to follow the rules to get their free dope and some just can't cope with that. The film also features the doctors who try to deal with the hardship of working with heroin addicts, while convincing the authorities that providing the drug to heroin addicts is a good way to assist in ridding them of their addiction. **Toughing It Out** was written and directed by Helene Pichette, and produced by Monique Simard for Montreal-based Productions Virage, in association with Radio-Canada and CBC
http://www.cbc.ca/passionateeyesunday/feature_270408.html

Bevel Up – (Vancouver) (2007) (45 min) (Nettie Wild)

Bevel Up: the documentary (45 min) follows street nurses from the outreach street program of the BC Centre for Disease Control as they work with youth, sex workers, and street-entranced men and women in the alleys and hotels of Vancouver's inner city. The footage is startling in its intimacy, compassion, and real-life drama. Divided into chapters, each segment offers additional compelling on-location footage and expert interviews. Key ethical, practical and legal issues are discussed and debated by the nurses featured in the documentary as well as a nursing ethicist and nursing practice consultant from the British Columbia College of Nurses.

National Film Board of Canada: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=53955>

Devil Plays Hardball – (Vancouver) (2006) (60 min)

“If you could get one person off the street, would you? Could you? *Devil Plays Hardball* is a radical interventionist documentary by [Paperny Films](#) that seeks to answer this question. Four well-established Vancouver residents have 10-months to mentor homeless individuals from various Vancouver neighborhoods who have the desire – but not necessarily the means – to re-enter mainstream society. What ensues is a complicated journey that provides an up-close and intimate look at the people most of us choose to ignore – Canada's homeless.” *Devil Plays Hardball* is directed by Nijole Kujmickas, and produced by Audrey Mehler of [Paperny Films](#) in association with CBC Newsworld.

<http://www.cbc.ca/passionateeyesunday/devilplayshardball/>

Contact: CBC Learning at cbclearing@cbc.ca

A Safer Sex Trade – (Vancouver) (2006) (Carolyn Allain)

This documentary explores the stigma of prostitution through the eyes of three women who work at different levels in the sex trade. The film explores the lives of Scarlett Lake, who has been a madam for 30 years, Jennifer Allan, a former drug addicted sex trade worker who is now dedicated to helping prostitutes on the streets, and Simone, an independent escort who offers “girlfriend experiences” to clients.

<http://www.newser.com/archive-arts-living-news/1G1-160221788/a-safer-sex-trade-explored-through-filmravens-eye.html>

Scarlett is a highly successful madam with 30 years experience in the sex trade business; Simone is a high-class sex worker who services wealthy clients in five Western Canadian cities; and Jennifer is a former drug addicted prostitute who now works tirelessly to offer support to sex trade workers on the streets. These women have had different experiences in the sex trade business, but they're united by one concern-the safety of women in their stigmatized industry.

Jennifer exposes the ugly side of Vancouver's streets, where Canada's current laws have led to the increasing marginalization of street walkers and have made the women at the front lines of the notorious Downtown Eastside particularly vulnerable. It's a danger that's made international headlines with the arrest and recent conviction of Robert Willie Pickton. Charged with the murder of 26 women, in December 2007 he was found guilty of second degree murder of 6 Vancouver sex trade workers. Pickton still faces a further 20 murder charges, and is scheduled to appear in court to fix a date for a possible second trial.

On the other side are high-priced sex workers like Simone, who are not at such risk. Their expensive services are advertised in the yellow pages as escort agencies, and are taxed and operated under tacit approval of the police.

"The sex trade is a valid career option today if managed properly," says Scarlett, who now speaks publicly about her work as a madam and her belief that prostitution should be legalized.

A Safer Sex Trade explores this double standard at work by putting faces to the women who represent both perspectives: life in the high rise and on the street.

A Safer Sex Trade was produced and directed by Carolyn Allain and co-written with David Ray. The documentary is produced by [Cheap and Dirty Productions Inc.](#), in association with CBC Newsworld. http://www.cbc.ca/thelens/program_230107.html

Finding Dawn – (Vancouver and other locations) (2006) (73 min)

Dawn Crey. Ramona Wilson. Daleen Kay Bosse. These are just three of the estimated 500 Aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in Canada over the past thirty years. Directed by acclaimed Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh, ***Finding Dawn*** is a compelling documentary that puts a human face to this national tragedy. This is an epic journey into the dark heart of Native women's experience in Canada. From Vancouver's skid row, where more than 60 women are missing, we travel to the "Highway of Tears" in northern British Columbia, and onward to Saskatoon, where the murders and disappearances of Native women remain unresolved. Along the road to honour those who have passed, we uncover reason for hope. It lives in Native rights activists Professor Janice Acoose and Fay Blaney. It drives events such as the annual Women's Memorial March in Vancouver and inspires communities all along the length of Highway 16 to come together to demand change. ***Finding Dawn*** illustrates the deep historical, social and economic factors that contribute to the epidemic of violence against Native women in this country. It goes further to present the ultimate message that stopping the violence is everyone's responsibility.

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=52581>

Metamorphosis: An In-Depth Look at the Life of Former Street Kids – (Vancouver) (2005) (Jennifer Mervyn)

The part-Métis 29-year-old crisis worker and Counselling Psychology PhD candidate was the first UBC student to submit a video ethnography as her doctoral dissertation. A former street youth herself, Mervyn's video, *"Metamorphosis: An in-depth look at the life of former street kids,"* followed the lives of four women as they successfully transitioned their lives off the street -- something she is determined to help many others accomplish. "There are so few role models or success stories about street youth starting new lives. But they need hope and those working with them need to be reminded that they're making a difference," she says. By working closely with the women, she ensured their stories were told honestly and respectfully in support of their new life paths. The film debuted in 2005 at the International Association for Counselling conference in Argentina and has since been shown more than 20 times in North America. She's also hoping to shed a little light not only for youth, but for policy makers in government and health organizations.

<http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/annualreports/2006/mervyn.php>

Fix – (Vancouver) (2002) (93 min) (Nettie Wild)

This documentary captures the pulse of one of the most controversial issues of our times. It is the story of Vancouver's struggle to open Canada's first safe injection site for drug users. It is the story of a man and of a city fighting drugs and addiction. Dean Wilson used to be an IBM salesman. Now he is possibly the most outspoken drug addict in Canada. He is a loud and articulate advocate for street addicts from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, one of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods, and the site of the highest HIV rate in North America. Ann Livingston is the charismatic organizer of Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU). She is a nonuser, driven by an impatient spirituality. She is extremely confrontational. In 27 cities around the world, safe injection sites have been proven to save lives. Together Ann and Dean lead an unpredictable crew of street addicts in their fight to open North America's first safe injection site for drug users in Vancouver. In English with option of French subtitles.

National Film Board of Canada: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=55682>

Through a Blue Lens – (Vancouver) (1999) (52 min)

Odd Squad's landmark video project about the lives of a half of a dozen drug addicts scratching out a hellish existence in Vancouver's notorious Downtown Eastside was produced by the National Film Board of Canada. 'Through a Blue Lens' has proven to be the NFB's most successful video in their history (the 'National Film Commission' as it was known then was formed in 1939 by an act of Canadian Parliament). It has been viewed, whole or in part, by tens of millions of viewers worldwide. The trials and tribulations of these drug-addicted film subjects were captured and released to the viewing public to high international acclaim. The film delivers a simple but powerful message regarding the perils about drug abuse. The film humanizes the addicts but it also portrays the police officers chronicling life on the mean streets of Vancouver's Skid Road as caring and compassionate people. The video is a roller coaster of emotion but make no mistake, this is a ride best taken by video only.

http://www.oddsquad.com/EN/through_a_blue_lens/_through_a_blue_lens/

National Film Board: <http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=33864>

Not Just a Bad Day: Living with Bipolar Disorder - (Vancouver) (50 min) (Gillian Hrankowski)

On the surface, Mike, Erin, and Martha appear to have little in common, but all live under the shadow of bipolar disorder (once known as manic depression), a complex mental illness marked by significant disturbances in mood. Mike is a charismatic young man whose partying lifestyle and abuse of recreational drugs foreshadow a severe manic episode that has him committed to a psychiatric ward. Erin is a young mom whose ability to cope with her new baby deteriorates as she swings between manic episodes and soul-crushing depressions. Martha is a divorced single mom who lost her career and marriage to a manic episode; with group therapy and medication, she is finally lifting herself out of a crippling two-year depression. Treating them all is Dr. Paul Termansen, a psychiatrist at Community Psychiatric Services on Metro Vancouver's North Shore, where the three attend his mood disorders program. With intimate access and great sensitivity, the film details their personal struggles with the emotional highs and lows of a disorder they must learn to manage in order to lead productive, balanced lives.

http://www.psychiatry.ubc.ca/__shared/assets/2007-123865.htm

<http://www.picturethisfestival.org/CatalogueEntries2008/935Notjustabadday.html>

A group of films were shown at a DTES Film Festival a few years ago, including:

<http://carnegie.vcn.bc.ca/index.pl/filmfest>

Skid Row (1956)

Produced by Alan King this bleak yet lyrical portrait of homeless men in the DTES inspired a new generation of documentary.

Dir: Alan King CBC 30 min

News Report on DTES (1972)

This CBC special observes that many of the men living on social assistance in the DTES are there because they were injured in BC the resource industry. Reporter Mike Halleran concludes, "We know how to grow but we don't know how to provide the services that come with growth." Could a reporter make a similar statement on CBC today?

CBC 15min

Slum Landlords (1972)

A report on the terrible housing conditions in DTES hotels.

CBC 10min

Whistling Smith (1975)

Sergeant Bernie "Whistling" Smith pounds the beat in the DTES.

Dir: Michael Scott, Marrin Canell NFB 27 min

Right to Fight (1986)

Nettie Wild's rarely seen first video, this musical is about housing.

Dir: Nettie Wild 50 min (selections will be shown)

Out of Riverview (1986)

CBC report: When Riverview was closed residents were left to fend for themselves.

7min

These ones portray different aspects of the DTES over the past decade or so:

Within These Walls (1996)

This powerful documentary gives voice to those who have been hospitalized within the mental health care system.

Chris McDowell and Myriam Fougère 30 min

Making Shelter (1997)

A portrait of the Four Sister's Coop and the Four Corners Bank.

Dir: Annie O'Donoghue Asterick Productions 26min (selections will be shown)

Down Here (1997)

Veronica Mannix's first documentary about the DTES, is a biography of poet and ex-addict Bud Osborn.

Dir: Veronica Mannix 50min

Keys to Kingdoms (1998)

A film-poem based on Bud Osborn's famous poem about living in a run-down DTES hotel.

Dir: Nathaniel Geary 22min

Through a Clear Lens (1999)

Headlines Theatre put video cameras in the hands of a small group of youth to research and document the interface between youth and the police. *Headlines Theatre 10 min*

We All Fall Down (2000)

This semi-autobiographical story is loosely based on Martin Cummins' experiences living in the DTES. Filmed on location it is a story of love, friendship, betrayal, addiction, and re-birth set against the bleak backdrop of the inner city.

Dir: Martin Cummins 92 min

Stopping Traffik - The War Against the War on Drugs

"Drug prohibition does exactly the opposite of what it was intended to do. Drug prohibition creates violence; it creates more addicts; it creates more dysfunction in society," said the late Gil Puder, once a "Golden Boy" in the Vancouver Police Department. A respected constable he had no idea that he'd fall so far from favour in the organization that once embraced him. The force spent endless hours and dollars investigating him. His crime? He spoke out against the war on drugs.

Dir: Jerry Thompson, Raincoast Storylines 45min

The Fight for Woodward's (2003)

This world premier tracks what happened to the squatters during and after the fall 2002 occupation of Woodward's.

Dir: Michael Sider 30min

Traplines in Vancouver (2003)

In Vancouver Peter and Doe check their "traplines", 5 and 20 cent cans are retrieved for refund. Binnars move discretely along the lanes of affluent neighbourhoods. We discover mainstream society as seen from its margins. *Dir: Benoit Raoulx 37 min*

Kuper Island: Return to the Healing Circle (1997)

For almost a century, hundreds of Coast Salish children were sent to the Kuper Island Indian Residential School. Isolated on a remote island off the coast of British Columbia, they were forbidden from speaking their native language, forced to deny their cultural heritage, and often faced physical and sexual abuse.

20 years after the school's closure, survivors are beginning to break the silence as they embark on an extraordinary spiritual journey.

Christine Welsh/Peter C. Campbell Gumboot Productions 45 min

Yuxweluptun: Man of Masks

In 1868 the Canadian government passed the Indian Act to subdue Native peoples by confining them to reservations, outlawing their languages and destroying land rights. Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun shoots the Indian Act in protest.

Dir: Dana Claxton 21min

B) OTHER CANADIAN FILMS

SHORT FILMS

The Schoolhouse - (Toronto) Sami Siva contact@samisiva.com

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080817.wvschoolhousenew0807/VideoStory/National/home?pid=RTGAM.20080818.wschoolhouse18>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080817.wvschoolhousenew0807/VideoStory/VideoeoLineup/Archive>

an alternative housing option in TO for those who won't give up drinking but can be housed

LONGER FILMS

Home Safe – (Toronto)

<http://76.74.229.4/~tdrcnet/uploads/file/Cathy/homesafe.pdf>

<http://skyworksfoundation.org/newProjects/?sectionID=newProjects&subSectionID=homeSafe>

In this new documentary, families with children who have faced homelessness make their voices heard as they share their experience. Although their issues have been researched, studied and reported, the families and children remain invisible to much of the public. In *Home Safe*, director Laura Sky and Sky Works Foundation work directly with the kids and their families to address the issue of homeless from their perspectives. *Home Safe* aims to be more than a film. It aims to mobilize communities to engage in positive action by providing children and families in crisis with a forum for expression, engagement and action.

Check out other docs produced by Sky Works Foundation. There are a number that focus on homelessness and related issues (addiction, mental health...)

<http://skyworksfoundation.org/documentaries/?sectionID=documentaries>

Downtown Dawgs – (Toronto/Calgary) 2007 87min

Downtown Dawgs focuses on a group of homeless people who are attempting to make a change in their lifestyle by trying out for the Canadian National Homeless soccer team. Filmmaker Mike Scullion. His brother Kevin is co-filmmaker and one of the coaches.

Official selection: Calgary International Film Festival 2007; Edmonton International Film Festival 2007.

<http://www.downtowndawgs.ca/>

Downtown Dawgs follows the true story of Esau and Mike, two counselors working hard to give Calgary's downtrodden a second chance at life through the magic of the world's sport, soccer. As it turns out, the two counsellors are putting together a team for the first time ever from western Canada to enter the Homeless World Cup. Started by Scotsman Mel Young, the tournament sees teams from all over the world competing for the cup. Held in South Africa, whose slums provide an eye-opening glimpse into global poverty, the tournament seeks to promote awareness of global poverty. But back to the team; the Dawgs follow a simple mantra "clean spirit, clean body, clean mind." By keeping players busy for a few hours a week, the program hopes to help wean them off drugs and instill a sense of accomplishment and self-worth that will help them pick up the shattered pieces of their lives. Without giving too much away, the Dawgs face truancy troubles off the bat and the transient nature of the players makes them very hard to

track down, but a few dedicated members stick through to the qualifying round in Winnipeg. There, the Dawgs face their Ontario counterparts and from this the Canadian national team is formed. There are a few challenges along the way and the lack of experience dealing with bureaucracy takes its toll on some of the players. Eventually, it's all sorted out and they are off to South Africa. The film is a roller-coaster of emotion and director Mike Scullian draws you into the player's lives, each of their successes and failures become personal. By taking a close look at the real lives of homeless people, we are given an insight into the similarities they have with everyone else. They have hopes and dreams and goals, but for one reason or another have failed. Some are mentally ill, almost all suffer from drug addiction and have dealt with very disturbing personal lives, but underneath it all, they are just people, who have given up on the world that has given up on them. Who knew a movie about the homeless could be so depressing?
<http://gauntlet.ucalgary.ca/story/11626>

Cracked Not Broken – (Toronto) (2007)

Cracked Not Broken opens a disturbing window on the life of Lisa, a 37-year-old crack-cocaine addict and estranged mother of one who prostitutes herself to fuel her costly drug habit. Although she grew up in an upper middle-class family, went to the right schools and had the right friends, something went terribly wrong. Filmed almost entirely in the Toronto hotel room she lives in and works out of, Cracked Not Broken portrays a highly intelligent, vivacious, articulate and hyperactive woman juggling cell phone and drug paraphernalia with equal dexterity while talking with incredible frankness to filmmaker Paul Perrier.
<http://www.crackednotbroken.com/>

Damage Done: The Drug War Odyssey – (2007)

While they are law enforcement officers, the inherent vagueness of their oath allows room for intelligent interpretation as to what "enforcement" means. For members of L.E.A.P (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition) it means not busting you for smoking weed, hell maybe not even busting you if you have a twenty up your nose. Because for them it is no big secret that the War on Drugs is a total bust; an ideological battle getting us nowhere and in fact perpetuating a devastating cycle of misspent energy that truly, only keeps the whole mess going round. Filled with honest and totally surprising interviews from Police Officers from across North America, director Connie Littlefield's documentary *The Damage Done: The Drug War Odyssey* about the failure of our prohibition style war on drugs is playing as part of *The No More Drug War Double Bill* this weekend. With testimonials from cops and judges from Texas and Florida to Vancouver and California this is one of those rare documentaries that is so eloquent and concise that you couldn't think of a better way to express or even explore the subject.
http://www3.nfb.ca/webextension/damage-done/film/article_HighConcept.php

What sets *Damage Done* apart is the way it approaches the issue. Connie Littlefield's documentary, for example, doesn't interview the usual suspects. It doesn't include all those you'd expect to be in favour of drugs such as Marc Emery talking about being targeted by the U.S. federal government for selling marijuana seeds through the mail to U.S. customers, members of the B.C. Compassion Club pointing out the medicinal benefits of cannabis, or protesters snubbing authority by smoking up at the annual Smoke-In. Instead, *Damage Done* takes a much more subversive approach by talking to police officers and justice officials, the assault troops on the front lines of the drug war. As members of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, their story is depressingly familiar: almost without exception, they started out as true believers in the war but ended up coming to the realization that they were just part of a drug enforcement industry that thrives on keeping drugs illegal. Their message? Our current system of drug prohibition doesn't work and needs to change.
http://www3.nfb.ca/webextension/damage-done/film/article_IsntWorking.php

Street City – (Toronto) (Available in 74:00, 58:00 and 47:30 minute versions.)

This is a film about a housing solution in TO (I like solutions, like *The Schoolhouse*, rather than just the problems); an excellent insight into the people who we need to serve. It's a gritty collection of portraits and dynamics. They're there and we turn away from them at our peril, and theirs. This is what housing "difficult to house people" is about – get used to it, and if we get to know them we might understand how to be accommodating. The film is 10 years old but still relevant and the concept is still working in Toronto

as Strachan House, under the Home First Society who have 15 other projects, housing 500 men and women in 425 units around Toronto.

<http://homesfirstsociety.googlepages.com/hfsproperties>

http://www.closeupfilms.ca/Films/Street_City.php

Cottonland – (Cape Breton) (2006) (Nance Ackerman) (54 min)

When the last of Cape Breton's once thriving coalmines shut down in the late 1990s, the shrinking population of Glace Bay faced chronic unemployment. While covering the crisis, celebrated photographer Nance Ackerman saw what she describes as the human cost of cultural genocide in a white community struggling to come to terms with its loss. It was a tragedy that haunted Ackerman long after her assignment was over. In her new film, Ackerman reveals how easy it is for a social dependency on the state to carry over into a personal dependency on a potent little pill, the prescription painkiller OxyContin. With the collaboration of recovering addict Eddie Buchanan, *Cottonland* guides us through a culture of despair. We encounter a number of smart, self-aware men and women at different stages of dependency. Some have managed to shift to the detoxifying effects of methadone; others remain in thrall to the power of their addiction. All speak candidly and unflinchingly of the ritual of the fix. Nance Ackerman's analysis is as sharp as the end of a needle. Her film demystifies the world of the addict, while showing us the complex social nexus that contributes to such severe dependency. How does an entire community fall into despair? What happens when the social order is weakened by forces beyond its control? *Cottonland* draws a coherent line between economic and social depression. In its pointed focus on the troubled community of Glace Bay, this fearless documentary also asks us to consider the deeper roots of widespread social problems. *Cottonland* doesn't absolve the addict of responsibility but it does illuminate the conditions under which the addict thrives. It also reminds us of the spiral of social ills that follow addiction as families break down and crime increases. Tragically, it is the people on whom the state once depended for its robust economy that now need the most help. If a combination of social and economic factors increase the likelihood of dependency, a strong and cohesive social network can help people to resist. Ironically, this network exists in the neighbouring Native community of Membertou, where the economy is flourishing and a culture of hope thrives after generations of despair. *Cottonland* emphasizes the importance of collective approach to the problems of addiction and dependency. Ultimately, *Cottonland* affirms the power of possibility.

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=52109>

My Father My Teacher – (2005) (52 min)

It's a crisp summer day, and a pod of belugas has been spotted in the distance. Dennis Allen and his 77-year-old father, Victor, climb into a boat and head onto the water. They're in good spirits as they prepare to carry on the deeply rooted Inuvialuit tradition of the whale hunt. But, it hasn't always been this simple. After years of animosity, Dennis is only now beginning to understand and respect his father. This documentary captures a delicate and evolving relationship as they come together in the spectacular settings of Baby Island and the Mackenzie Delta in Canada's Western Arctic. The film unfolds as a series of astonishingly honest conversations. Dennis candidly reveals the reasons he severed ties with his family as a youth, falling instead into addiction. Today, he is fighting to restore broken links to his culture and community, beginning with his father. Meanwhile, Victor weaves wonderfully charming and poignant stories. As he talks about his family, growing up in the Arctic, and the dramatic changes he has seen in Inuvialuit life, his extraordinary wisdom and strength of character shine through. *My Father My Teacher* is an eloquent reflection of the bonds and tensions faced by all families. It is also an extraordinary look at the handing down of a precious family legacy from a father to his son.

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=52180&lg=en&v=h>

Last Call at the Gladstone Hotel – (Toronto)

This is a film about gentrification, in this case Toronto – but a big issue for Vancouver with the Olympics coming to town. It just won a Gemini. Bringing the filmmakers could help make a big impact that this film deserves. In 2000, developers purchase the crumbling, century-old Gladstone Hotel to turn it from skid row flophouse into trendy, arts and music hotspot. They think it's empty... until they meet Marilyn, the chambermaid with a heart of gold; Shirley Ann, the cynical front desk clerk; and a motley crew of residents, including Maryanne, an ex-bag lady with a sweet personality who has turned her room into a toxic zone. The staff and residents—some who have been there for over 30 years—worry they'll be

squeezed out during the hotel's revitalization. The developers come up with a plan: gradual restoration, seeing staff and residents remain upstairs, while the bar serves designer drinks to hip new clientele downstairs. It doesn't work. When experimental filmmaker, Christina Zeidler inherits the mess and forms a "business model that includes social change", the hotel has the last word. City inspectors demand complete rewiring. The boiler blows up leaving the hotel without heat, ceilings leak, walls crumble and now it's up to Zeidler to decide what to do. Shot over five years in a cinema direct style, this documentary is an intimate and compelling portrait of the effects of urban renewal upon the poor, exposing a pattern of displacement repeated in cities worldwide, and revealing the unintentional roles we often play in the process of gentrification.

http://www.myspace.com/last_call_productions

http://hotdocs.bside.com/2008/?_view=_filmdetails&filmId=15410882&mediaTab=filmDetails

<http://www.toronto.com/movies/article/514809>

The Street - (Montreal)

This is an older film about squatters in Montreal (NFB). Cameraman Richard Boyce spent a lot of time with the subjects and presented this really effectively at Movie Monday

"The Street is a gritty portrait of 3 homeless men living on the streets near Guy metro in Montreal. Made over a period of 6 years, the film follows the ups and downs of these deteriorating lives and is an intense, intimate portrait of street life. The film won critical acclaim and multiple awards, including the People Choice Award at HOT DOCS, the Jury Award for Feature Documentary at the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival and the Best Social Documentary at the Vermont International Film Festival." (Directed by Daniel Cross) (78 minutes)
<http://www.eyesteelfilm.com/projects.html> (scroll down the page)

In The Gutter and Other Good Places – (Calgary) (1993)

This is a terrific film about bidders in Calgary. The editor speaks very interestingly about this project.

"*In the Gutter and Other Good Places*, shot in Calgary by Writer/Director/Producer Cristine Richey (1993, 56 min), is the powerful account of three Calgary men, Colin, Jean, and Ron who survive by "dumpster-diving" – collecting bottles out of refuse containers for cash. The film is a detailed and compassionate look at the choices and circumstances which have shaped their lives. Challenging the conventional assumptions many of us may have about street people and how they got there, the film reveals that one of the characters, Ron, has a Masters in engineering science and that he gave up both his family and career at Gulf Oil because of alcoholism. Colin meanwhile, has access to a substantial inheritance and yet refuses to touch it, preferring to live on what he can collect from the dumpsters. Perhaps the film's most laudable feat is the trust with which the stories are told, bringing us closer to those who normally pass unseen." <http://upcoming.yahoo.com/event/150198/>

C) FILMS FROM USA

A Line in the Sand – (USA) (Jeffrey Chernov)

A Line in the Sand tells a gripping story of one man's fall from grace on the hard streets of New York City and how he ultimately finds redemption in the unlikeliest of places. A homeless man, known only as "Banzai", is haunted by the wreckage of his past. But it's not until he is jailed for an altercation with police that the full extent of his dark secret comes to light. A secret that stuns the detectives, forces them to confront their own beliefs of right and wrong, and leads them to question whether Banzai's personal torment can be punishment enough. A hard hitting drama with a pinch of dark comedy, A Line In the Sand delivers a powerful experience headlined by masterful performances and direction throughout.

<http://www.myspace.com/themayorslimo>

<http://pdpproductionsfilms.com/Home.html>

This Dust of Words – (USA) (2007) Bill Rose (62 mins)

A haunting documentary elegy to thwarted promise, *This Dust of Words* traces the life of Elizabeth Wiltsee, a young writer of uncompromising talent who ultimately died a lonely death at age 50, homeless and beset by paranoid schizophrenia. Elizabeth had an IQ of 200, taught herself to read at the age of four, and was translating classical Greek at ten. She attended Stanford, where she was lauded as a

student of unlimited potential. After graduation, she chose to live on the fringes, working as an au pair in Europe, in university libraries, and as a proofreader. All the while, she kept writing and reading prodigiously — sending off numerous plays and novels to publishers (all of which were rejected) — as her mental illness progressed. In 1994, not coping well and unable to work, she moved to the town of Watsonville, California, where she wound up living on the streets and sleeping on the steps of a local church. She disappeared after leaving town in 1999; her skeletal remains were found months later in a wilderness area 60 miles away. The film traces the mystery of her life, interweaving Wiltsee's writings with archival footage of her at Stanford and interviews with her professors, her brother, and Watsonville citizens who had tried to reach out to her. *Colour, Digibeta video. 62 mins.*

<http://thisdustofwords.com/>

bill@thisdustofwords.com

Cats of Mirikitani – (USA) (2006)

"Make art not war" is Jimmy Mirikitani's motto. This 85-year-old Japanese American artist was born in Sacramento and raised in Hiroshima, but by 2001 he is living on the streets of New York with the twin towers of the World Trade Center still ominously anchoring the horizon behind him. What begins as a simple verite portrait of one homeless man will become a rare document of daily life in New York in the months leading up to 9/11. How deeply these two stories will be intertwined cannot yet be imagined. This is the story of losing "home" on many levels. www.thecatsofmirikitani.com

Out of the Shadow – (USA)

A woman with schizophrenia is finally housed after 20 years of revolving door, produced by a daughter about her mother. www.outoftheshadow.com

West 47th Street – (USA)

This film is about the original Fountain House in NYC – really moving testimonial to the value of a home, something useful to do, and community – this is THE model. Filmed over a couple of years, realistic about the warts, I like it because the director has bipolar and out about it. By Bill Lichtenstein and June Peoples

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/west47thstreet/>

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/west47thstreet/about.html>

Jupiter's Wife – (USA)

Jupiter's Wife is about a homeless woman in NY's Central Park with a story as intriguing as Mirikitani's. "JUPITER'S WIFE tells the story of Maggie, a beguiling homeless woman living in New York City's Central Park. In her forties, Maggie's vibrant personality and unconventional persona attract the attention of acclaimed filmmaker Michel Negroponte, who accompanies Maggie as she wanders the park with her pack of dogs and an enormous backpack. A captivating jumble of cryptic stories, Maggie's conversation is laced with intrigue and startling claims; among them, she claims to be the daughter of the Hollywood movie star Robert Ryan and married to the Roman god Jupiter. Fascinated, Negroponte and his camera follow Maggie for the next two years, as clue by clue, her enigma is deciphered and an astonishing story is revealed."

<http://www.docurama.com/productdetail.html?productid=NV-NVG-9415-NVG-9569>

Homeless in Paradise – (USA)

This film is set in Santa Monica but very relevant and clear eyed about problems created by being too good at accommodating homeless populations, when others around you aren't, but also 4 good case studies. "Homeless in Paradise" follows four individuals who are homeless in Santa Monica, California. As they survive on the streets, Rick, Faye, Donna, and Simon struggle with addiction and mental illness, while receiving support from a city in crisis. From their perspective, we see a political and social system drawing fire from all sides of the political and social spectrum.

<http://homelessinparadise.net/>

Dark Days (USA/UK) (2000) (88 min)

In the pitch black of the tunnel, rats swarm through piles of garbage as high-speed trains leaving Penn Station tear through the darkness. For some of those who have gone underground, it has been home for as long as twenty-five years. Deeply moving and surprisingly entertaining, Dark Days is an eye-opening

experience that shatters the myths of homelessness by revealing a thriving community living in tunnels beneath New York City and honestly capturing their resilience and strength in their struggle to survive. Dark Days has won 6 awards.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0235327/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Days_\(documentary\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Days_(documentary))

It Was a Wonderful Life (USA) (1993) (82 min)

In this award-winning festival standout, Academy Award nominee Michèle Ahayon presents a riveting and powerful account of six women who are members of America's growing hidden homeless population. Narrated by Jodie Foster, and with an original musical score by Melissa Etheridge, this heart-wrenching film expertly captures the hardships and triumphs these courageous women experience in their daily struggle for survival. Meet Josephine, Reena, Marie, Jeanette, Lou and Terry. They are intelligent, articulate women who had secure, active, and fulfilling lives until one day everything unraveled. Now homeless after an ugly divorce or loss of a job, these women do not show up in shelters or receive public assistance; they do not sleep in doorways or ask for handouts. Too proud to be counted, they prefer to exist under the radar, sleeping out of their cars or in cheap motels. Both compelling and consciousness-raising, *It Was a Wonderful Life* cuts through the stereotypes and clichés to give a human face to this undeniable tragedy. And, with fresh insight into the plight of the homeless, Obayon shows how these women have managed to make a life for themselves, using only their ingenuity and perseverance to get by.

<http://www.docurama.com/productdetail.html?productid=nv-nvg-9583>

Tent Cities Toolkit: A multimedia grassroots primer (USA)

This is an interactive DVD organizing tool focused on issues of homelessness and the role of grassroots, democratic tent cities as a necessary step to resolving homelessness. The *Toolkit* aims to raise awareness of the nationwide lack of housing and criminalization of the poor, and to provide a practical set of resources for creating a tent city or alternative housing in communities nationwide.

The *Grassroots Primer* DVD and its companion website are intended to mobilize grassroots tent city advocacy efforts, connecting housed and unhoused activists worldwide into a cohesive political force for effective social change. Future tools within the *Tent Cities Toolkit* will focus on policy-makers, neighborhood groups, new residents of tent cities, and educational institutions.

Through informative videos and computer-based resources, the *Tent Cities Toolkit* offers practical hands-on information on the creation of grassroots, democratic tent city communities. Developed through a unique collaborative partnership between Dignity Village and Kwamba Productions, the *Toolkit* uses the visionary example of Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon as a case study.

2006 | digital video | DVD/DVD-ROM | color | stereo | ~100 minutes

The *Tent Cities Toolkit* includes:

DVD video content:

Interactive menus and videos, Audio narration by Dignity Villagers, Photo galleries, Behind the scenes

DVD-ROM content: Documents and articles, Workbooks and exercises, Web links and discussion forum

www.tentciestoolkit.org

D) FILMS FROM OUTSIDE NORTH AMERICA

Homeless FC – (Hong Kong) (2007) (103 min) (James Leong)

The members of the Dawn Team are perhaps the ultimate underdogs. Chor Pat lost all his money and his family because of his gambling addiction. Ah Hung is a former gang member trying to start over. Ah Lung ended up on the streets after a series of misfortunes, and David joined because he was lonely. The only thing these men have in common, other than a deep and abiding passion for soccer, is the fact that they all live on the streets of Hong Kong. They are homeless. This is a decidedly different look at Hong Kong; the glittering towers can be glimpsed in the distance, but the dirty gritty reality of these men's lives is one of poverty and despair. When the possibility of competing in the Homeless World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa, becomes a reality, every member of the Dawn Team must battle each other and themselves for a much-coveted spot on the squad (only eight players will be chosen). James Leong and Lynn Lee

followed the team over the course of a year, capturing the highs and lows of their tumultuous journey to South Africa. Every hackneyed cliché of the sports drama (the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, the triumph of the underdog) is made anew in *Homeless F.C.*, simply because this time they're real, making this a genuine crowd pleaser in the best sense of the word. If the sight of the rather large Chor Pat waving his jersey like a flag in the bright sunlight of South Africa doesn't bring on a sappy grin, perhaps you should check your pulse.

<http://www.viff.org/tixSYS/2007/filmguide/eventnote.php?notepg=1&EventNumber=1244>

<http://www.homelessfcmovie.com/>

Elling - (Norway) (2001)

Elling is a feature comedy drama about a couple of guys getting housing after being thoroughly institutionalized. Comedy is good - a way to get people to come a talk about an issue who won't come to a meeting/lecture. "Elling (Per Christian Ellefsen) is a neurotic middle-aged man who has led an extremely sheltered life and is institutionalized after his mother's death triggers a nervous breakdown. Upon being discharged, he is given a flat in Oslo to share with his friend and fellow patient Kjell Bjarne (Sven Nordin), a food-loving would-be womanizer whose loutish behavior occasionally proves taxing to the fastidious Elling. At first both men are paralyzed by separation anxiety and fear of the outside world, and simple tasks like grocery shopping or making a phone call present major challenges. Once Kjell Bjarne decides to venture beyond the confines of their home, however, his unlikely infatuation with a lonely pregnant woman (Marit Pia Jacobsen) causes a rift between the two friends, prompting Elling to start forging social contacts and seek a calling of his own. Without delving deeply into the clinical aspects of mental illness, this lighthearted comedy presents a convincing and utterly sympathetic portrait of socially challenged people coping with everyday situations. The movie was a huge box office hit in its native Norway and earned an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film of 2001."

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/elling/>

Available to rent from Videomatica: <http://www.videomatica.bc.ca/system/default.asp?i=&t=&st=T&s=Elling>