

Grandview Calvary Baptist Church



**LFS 350 FINAL REPORT
COMMUNITY KITCHEN ASSESSMENT
IN
GRANDVIEW WOODLAND AND KENSINGTON CEDAR COTTAGE**

GROUP 23

Vancouver Native Housing Society



Executive Summary

This project was aiming to assess the conditions and usage of community kitchens (CKs) in two Vancouver neighborhoods, Grandview Woodland and Kensington Cedar Cottage. Our objective was to fill the knowledge gap between the City of Vancouver and non-city owned CKs. Using an Asset-based Community Development approach, we made recommendations based on the observations we conducted during our kitchen visits. Group members visited six different kitchens collectively in these two neighborhoods to observe the kitchen environment and interview responsible personnel. Based on the survey provided by our community partner, kitchens were interviewed about physical infrastructures, programming, accessibility and benefit populations. We used both qualitative and quantitative research methods as part of our analysis. The qualitative method included observations, surveys and interviews, and the quantitative data was collected through questions such as usage hours, managing time and numbers of people. The results showed that physical infrastructures, such as kitchen equipment and facilities are well and easily maintained. The most popular programs included cooking classes and group cooking events, which are beneficial for the participating seniors, families with children and new immigrants. Based on the kitchen assets, our recommendations are incorporating cultural aspects into food programming, providing resources needed for kitchen improvements, hiring professionals to ensure that accurate food knowledge is taught in programs, as well as creating a self-sustaining business to achieve financial independency in the long run.

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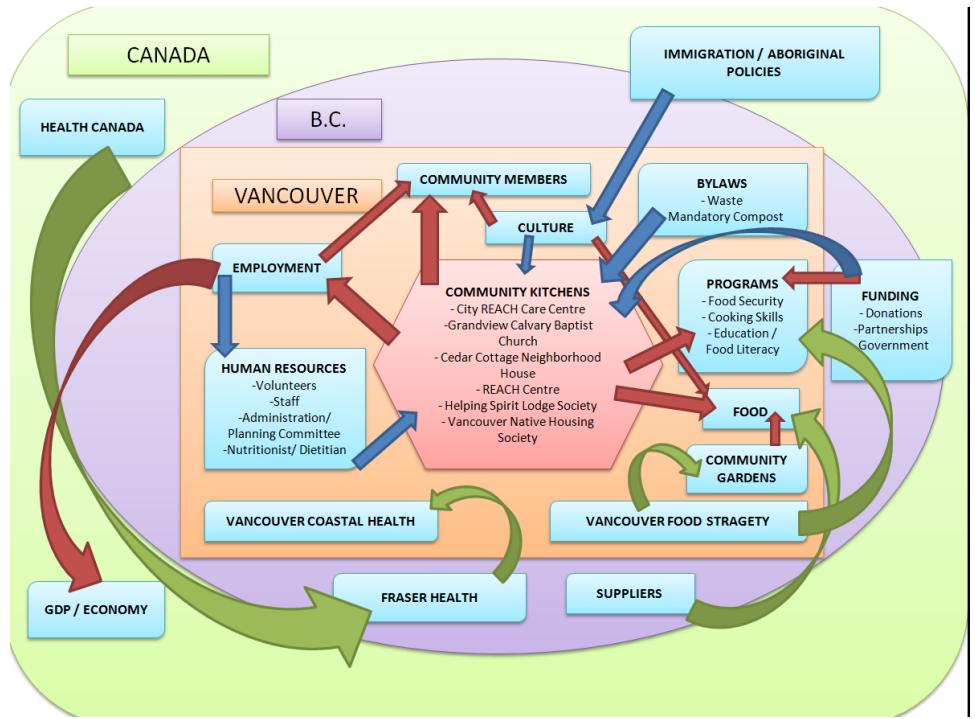
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Introduction

For this community research project, our group was assigned the Grandview Woodland and Kensington Cedar Cottage areas. This area consists of a higher proportion of single parent families and unemployed residents than the Vancouver average (Statistics Canada, 2006). These populations are particularly vulnerable to income-related food insecurity as they may have insufficient food budget. Grandview Woodland also has a high population of Aboriginal descent. Household food security issues exist amongst these indigenous populations due to limited access to culturally appropriate food (Chan, Fediuk, Hamilton, Rostas, Caughey, Kuhnlein, Egeland & Loring, 2006). Chan et al. (2006) suggests that food security can be improved through increased economic support for local community hunts, freezers and education programs, as well as better access to cheaper and higher quality food.

Community kitchens (CKs) are also an effective strategy in improving community food security (CFS), where community members are able to access safe food and obtain nutritionally adequate diets through a culturally acceptable environment and a sustainable food approach (Hamm & Bellows, 2003). Some kitchens offer programs that provide a safe environment and cost-efficient food ingredients for people to cook together. Members are nourished by food, but also grow personally as they engage with cultural exchanges and social interactions with like-minded individuals (Lacovou, Pattieson, Truby & Palermo, 2012).

Illustrated to the right is a simple systems diagram of our project. The **red** arrows are direct outputs of the community kitchens, **blue** arrows are direct inputs and **green** arrows are components that affect the qualities and regulations of the community kitchens.



This project is a new research for the region of Metro Vancouver to collect in-depth data related to CKs using the “Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)” approach (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). ABCD focuses on the merits and strengths of the community rather than its weaknesses; the available resources of each kitchen were identified rather than the components that were missing. Having community residents participate in the input of ideas and information allows them to access a greater amount of resources in the future. The positive outcomes include a stronger social cohesion and reduced inequality through a stronger intra-community connection (McCullum et al, 2005).

Due to the flexible design of the project, we started out not knowing what to expect from the community partners we would contact with, or any knowledge about their kitchen facilities and how they were used. We also may have not

encompassed all of ABCD's principles while using the provided survey, which will be discussed later in the report.

The objective of our project is to identify, describe, and fill the knowledge gap between CKs and the City of Vancouver, our community partner. Through the Vancouver Food Strategy, the City has identified their goals and steps to building sustainable food systems, including improving food access, taking part in community food celebrations, and overall making the city "a healthy city for all" (City of Vancouver, 2015). To meet these goals, the City has identified CKs as a great starting point to reach each respective community through existing kitchen assets. However, the city currently does not know what kind of facilities and programs are present and how they can be supported by the city. As Grandview Woodland has a high population of food-insecure families, it is a great community to research how CKs can help increase food security.

Our inquiry questions are based on the survey provided by our community partner to identify what physical infrastructure are present in the kitchens we interviewed, what kind of programming is set in place, and who are the people that benefit from the kitchen.

Methods

Data collection approach:

The data collection approach included both qualitative and quantitative methods. We first filled out the observation forms, and with the approval of the hosts, took pictures of the facilities and other essential elements of the kitchens. We then interviewed a coordinator of the kitchen according to the interview questions provided by our community partner. During the interview, we collected quantitative information, such as the hours of usage per week and the managing time.

Procedure:

Our mission is to work with at least six CKs, four provided to us by our community partner and two that we found through our own research. We contacted them through phone and email to give a brief overview of the project and asked for their participation. After setting a mutually convenient time, we assigned two group members to visit each kitchen to conduct the interviews. Before the visits, each group member finished the tutorial course on research ethics. The interviews took between 20-30 minutes to complete.

Analysis:

We collected all the data from the interviews and compiled them into a spreadsheet to better observe overarching themes. Quantitative data, such as the hours the kitchen is used every week, hours needed for kitchen management, and how many people can be accommodated in the counter space, was used to provide graphs to show commonalities and differences

between the kitchens. Please refer to *Appendix 1* for a complete table of our observations. Qualitative data such as the programs and users were compared across all the kitchens, also included in *Appendix 1*.

Ethical considerations:

For ethical considerations, we modified the consent forms provided by the teaching team to include a brief description of our project permission to use their names in our project. All personal information was kept confidential. We avoided using sensitive language, respected their culture and religion, and avoided taking pictures of people's faces.

Results

Our observations provided us with qualitative data, while quantitative data came mostly from the interview and survey. Half of the six CKs we visited were wheelchair accessible, and all are easily accessible with parking lots and within walking distance from public transportation. All kitchens are mainly used for food and nutrition related programs, specifically cooking classes to teach community members cooking skills and nutrition programs to learn about healthy eating. One kitchen has an on-site nutritionist providing advice for participants. Most kitchens are highly used by various programs every week (>20 hours/week), except REACH Community Health Centre, due to preparations for renovation at the end of November. Among these six kitchens, City Reach Care Society is holding the most food related programs (6-7) every week, while Helping Spirit Lodge Society and REACH Community Health Centre currently have two or less programs per week. Most kitchens require less than five hours per week to manage, which include scheduling, grocery shopping, and addressing problems. Helping Spirit Lodge Society, however, requires around 36 hours every week to manage the kitchen due to one person taking on the bulk of the work. Most CKs are available to the public, but are often restricted to community members or partners. No regulations other than maintaining the cleanliness of the kitchen were set, as long as scheduling works out and if applicable, the correct rent is paid. Five of the six mentioned the need for more counter and storage space to support the kitchens to be used more. Most kitchens can have six people using the counter at the same time to prepare and cook foods. They also mentioned the desire to

obtain more funding to renovate the facilities, buy new equipment, and expand working spaces in order to maximize CKs' function. If given adequate space and resources, most kitchens were interested in increasing nutrition related programs.

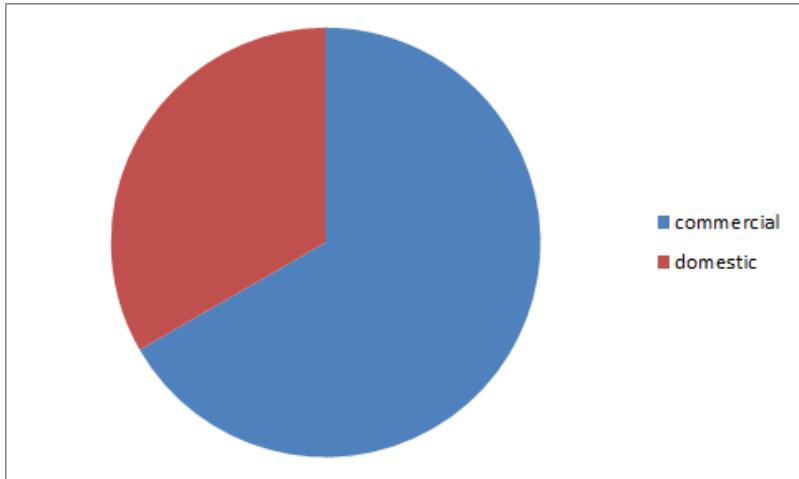


Figure 1. Kitchen Types of 6 community kitchens in Grandview & Cedar Cottage area - All four commercial kitchens have industrial dishwasher with sanitizer while the two domestic kitchens use domestic dishwasher to wash dishes.

Figure 2. Wheelchair accessibility for six community kitchens - Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Helping Spirit Lodge Society, and City Reach Care Society are wheelchair accessible.

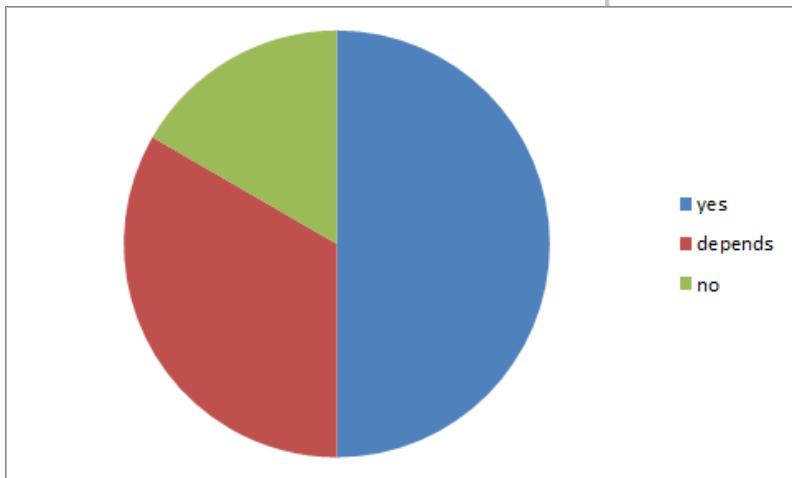
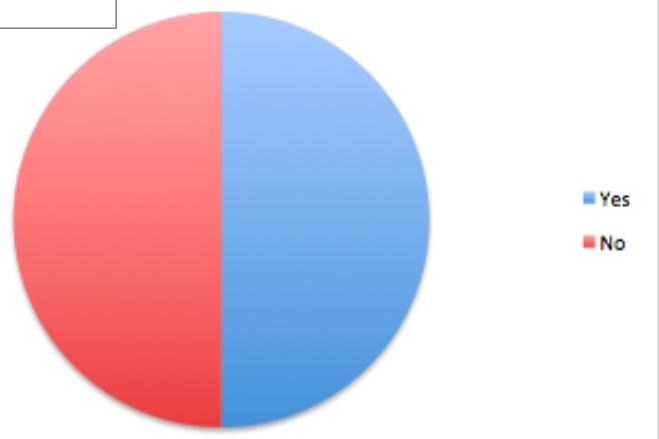


Figure 3. Availability of the 6 community kitchens for public use -
Interviewees chose "depends" for this question mostly depending on the availability of the kitchen, so they will only consider community members or partners or organizations who have connections with them.

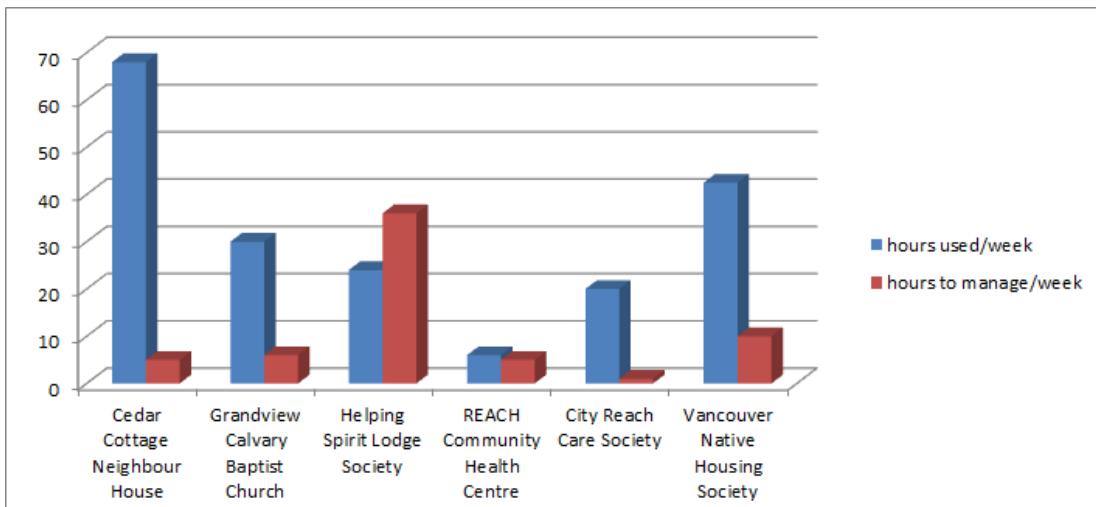


Figure 4. Hours of kitchen been used and hours required for kitchen management (per week)

The kitchens are mainly used for teaching classes and cooking skills, groups to cook together, preparing food for groups that meet on-site, and preparing charity meals. Besides yearly large events, such as Christmas and fundraising events, the kitchen at Vancouver Native Housing Society (VNHS) is a non-profit aboriginal institution, and cook only for its tenants. Helping Spirit Lodge Society shows the highest managing hours per week, as only one employee is in charge of scheduling, grocery shopping and cooking.

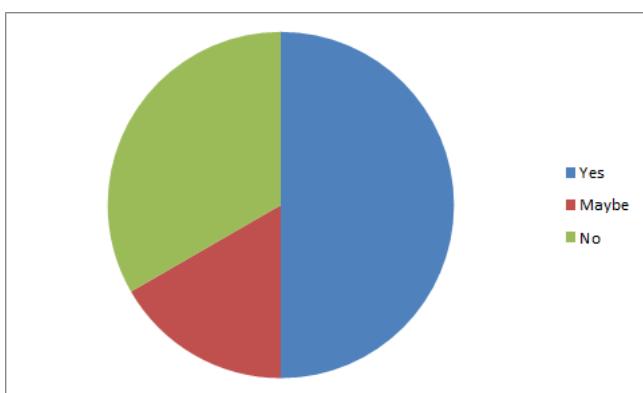
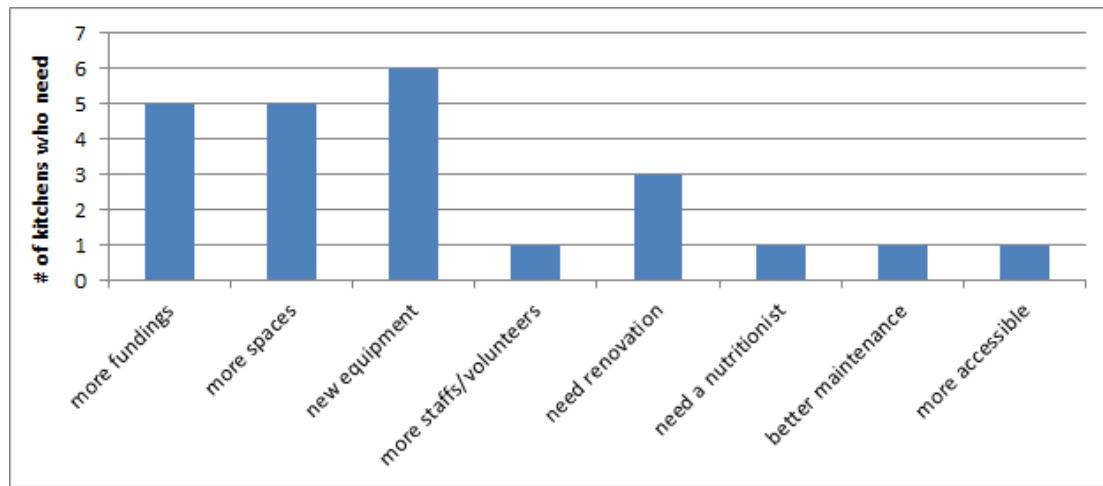


Figure 5. Willingness of offering the kitchen to community members trying to start a food-based business with a social mandate - One of the interviewee who said yes to this question also mentioned that they need to consider the limited spaces of the kitchen. The interviewee who chose maybe would need to see the availability of the kitchen each time.

Figure 6. Improvements needed to support the kitchen been used more



All CKs are open to having more community programming and community-based business, or would like to if provided more space, except Vancouver Native Housing Society, due to limited time, staff and the safety/privacy consideration for their senior residences. The limitation of space is the primary reason that CKs cannot rent out to local farmers to store food. However, they would accept renting out, given more storage space and equipment, or if it will bring an extra revenue.

Discussion

Significance:

Our project objective was to fill the knowledge gap between the City of Vancouver and its CKs through quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer our inquiry questions. Most of the kitchens we interviewed were well maintained with commercial equipment. Most kitchens provide food programs to teach cooking skills or offer meals/snacks to social groups during events. Some programs have limited participation to only community members due to privacy and limited resources and therefore are not well advertised outside the community. Those who do participate, however, benefit greatly from the tight connections made with other community members.

Identifying the assets of each CK allowed researchers to find out the significance that they have in the food system. From the data, it is clear that kitchens have a positive impact to their respective communities and the wider food system. Like community gardens and urban farms, CKs can bring people from all walks of life together which will improve the social cohesion. The available programs strengthen the relationship between people and their food where community members have more control over what they put into their body and a stronger connection with the food system.

Physical infrastructure is the building block of the kitchens. Kitchens can be used more on a daily basis and have higher potential to incorporate more programs with equipment that has been well taken care of. Cooking programs provide people opportunities to learn and make wiser choices in buying nutritious

food with limited budget. Charity meal programs increase the accessibility of healthy food for a food insecure population.

Connections:

Results illustrate that good equipment and management encourage kitchens to be used more often for different programs. For instance, Cedar Cottage Neighborhood House, which has the highest usage hours per week, has ten employees and a well-established business model, which helps minimize the managing time and make the kitchen highly functional. As all kitchens are non-profit, more funding and spaces are needed for the kitchens to be used more.

Limitations:

Since our results are interpreted based on the data collected from six CKs, the sample size is relatively small. Therefore, these kitchens may not be representative for the conditions and usage of all the CKs in our neighborhoods. As we only spoke with one representative from each kitchen's management group, most of the information we collected were their subjective opinions and suggestions. Different personnel involved in the CK may have different opinions in terms of the current conditions and usage of the kitchen depending on their positions.

Although this project focused on the ABCD approach, some of the questions in the interview questionnaire may not have follow that school of thought. For example, answers to the question "what would support you to have your kitchen used more" mentioned more funding, spaces and new equipment, which refer to

the insufficiency of the assets in the CKs, leading the interviewees to talk more about their lacks instead.

Some modifications can be adopted to improve the design of the methodology to minimize the limitations. By interviewing more kitchens and having a larger sample size, we can have a bigger picture of the kitchen conditions and usages. Some specific questions on the questionnaire can also be redesigned based on the assets of each program.

Conclusion

Different assets were identified in the kitchens we visited. Some targeted economically vulnerable groups or culturally sensitive populations by providing a safe environment and cost efficient ingredients for the community members. Some provide various cooking programs to promote healthy eating and teach basic principles of cooking skills. Some kitchens have well maintained equipment and additional learning spaces, eating areas, and child-care facilities. Others have successful business models to become financially independent and allocate resources to minimize management cost. Limitations of this project include limited sample size, subjective opinions from the interviewees, and non-ABCD interview questions.

Based on this information, the City of Vancouver will have better insight about how these CKs are used, what the facilities are like and who the target populations and audience are, providing the most appropriate resources and strategies to improve the operation of these kitchens.

Some questions remain unanswered including whether or not the skills and information received by the CK users are utilized to benefit the rest of the community (by becoming employed in food-related jobs), and whether or not the programs are indeed resolving issues around food security in the neighborhood (which will require a look at statistics). Do the kitchens have more capacity to incorporate more programming even if the resources were provided and how would those benefit the City of Vancouver are questions that would not be answered until the programs were actually implemented.

Recommendations:

Through these findings, we can improve CFS through implementation of ABCD by identifying, honing, and leveraging each kitchen's assets. Since our community has many single-parent families and indigenous people, CKs are ideal facilities for these community members to gather, providing a safe environment and cost efficient foods. The available programs strengthen the relationship between people and their food where community members have more control over what they consume and to reconnect with the food systems. The presence of professionals such as dieticians can enhance the filling of the knowledge gap between cooking skills and food knowledge.

Asset: Culture Diversity

Since some of our CKs are open to specific cultures, we recommend addressing food security issues in a way that embraces and preserves the culture of the target group. For example, recognizing the benefits of traditional cooking or finding substitutes to their traditional foods are a way of incorporating the cultural aspect into the designing of cooking programs.

Asset: Business model

Some CKs know how to allocate and maximize the funding and resources they have. We recommend that instead of solely relying on donations/funding received externally, kitchens should increase management of finances to be financially independent in the long run, or hold events to receive external funding (e.g. annual fundraising event by JustCatering). The goal is to create a self-sustaining organization.

Asset: Interest

Many CK staff and members are willing to strive for improvement. They are interested in equipment upgrades, more funding, and better storage room in order to use their kitchen to its full capacity. Domestic kitchens are interested in becoming community-oriented. We suggest, if possible, providing the resources they need to expand.

Asset: Equipment

Pang (Personal communication, October 28th) suggested that high usage of equipment is important. Some kitchens were able to do renovation because people realized how important the kitchen is and how it allows the facility to have so many programs. Chang (personal communication, November 4, 2015) also suggested using portable induction stove tops outside for programming since most kitchens have limited space. In this case, people can do food preparations outside of the kitchen as well.

Asset: Professionals

One kitchen has a dietitian on-site to monitor the progress of the food programs (D. Chang, personal communication, November 2, 2015). As to our community partners' wishes, we suggest that all kitchens have such professionals to ensure that the gap between food skills and food knowledge is filled (P. Dabiri, personal communication, November 4, 2015).

Critical Reflections

Upon completion of our research, it was time to gather all our information into our final report, presentation, conclude our research questions and make our recommendations to our community partner. At the same time, we had a chance as a group to reflect on our experiences and the things that we took away from the project, both for the project and for our own personal development.

Throughout the project, we all received a better understanding of Community-Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) and application of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). It was a very eye-opening experience to apply the knowledge we learned in class to our real-life experiences in the community/field. We also had a lot of fun, and enjoyed meeting different people in the community, instead of sitting in a lecture hall every week. Although the course overall was very challenging for us, we managed to pull through to the very end and was able to support each other and achieve our goal of finishing the project. This experience has taught us a lot about our own strengths and weaknesses, working within a group and going out of our comfort zones, as well as applying ABCD to real life situations. For every member of our group, these are all definitely experiences that have helped us grow as individuals and be able to apply to our future studies, work and life in the long run.

Personal Reflections:

“J”:

I thought it was an amazing experience going into the community and applying the knowledge we learned in class to real life situations. It was good to not sit in the lecture all day and be able to meet different kinds of people. I was responsible for the cold calls and it put me out of my comfort zone a lot, as well as learning how to deal with last minute changes and keeping my community partner’s wishes above mine. In school our schedules are laid out for us but for this project it was a struggle creating our own timeline and making sure everything was completed on time. We also struggled with working in our group, but in the end everyone managed to pull through and it helped to strengthen our relationship.

“R”:

This is the first time that I heard about asset-based development. Mostly when I think of improvement, it is all about new things. This brings a new perspective for me that even without new things, there can be improvement because of the change of the way you use the assets. I really enjoyed visiting community kitchens and talking with different people. Every kitchen has its own story and each of them have different conditions, so it is interesting when we compare the similarities and differences among them. From group working, I learned the key point of teamwork is that all members have the same goal, which can make us have the same path every time.

“P”:

I think it is a quite challenging course. Writing reports as a group could be good as work can be allocated among group members, but it is also hard to maintain the logic and consistency of the whole report. I really like the flexible learning sessions we have, which are used for the kitchen visits. I think community kitchen visits were a good experience to have a closer look at what the communities are actually doing. It would be nicer if we had a chance to participate in the programs of the kitchens, as we could probably have more understanding of how community kitchens work.

“B”:

Compared to my other commerce courses, LFS 350 was very time consuming and it was hard to find times that everyone was free. However, I enjoyed this community based learning experience as it was very interesting to get to step outside campus, enter the “real life”, and listen to different stories of community members. The communication with these members leaves a deeper impression in my mind about food security issues and benefits with community kitchens. The ABCD approach was an extremely interesting topic. My first reading in this class was the Ted Talk: Shut up and listen. I agree very much that the ABCD approach will be a successful in many cases. One of the challenges I found was that as human beings, we tend to notice what others lack; therefore, throughout the project we have been extra cautious on wordings.

“E”:

LFS 350 was a very different experience compared to my other classes; there was a lot of emphasis on the real world and future career paths. I felt like I was outside of my comfort zone a lot which made it difficult to enjoy the class at times. I am personally not a big fan of group projects because everyone has other commitments and usually jobs that they need to work around but I'm happy we managed to get to the end. Asset-based community development was a very difficult concept to grasp because I've spent my entire life being taught the deficit-focused approach for my personal aid work. However, I feel that it was a good point of realization that focuses on assets that may be better than dwelling on the negatives because each community is different and have needs based on their own environment. All in all, it was an interesting real life project that was quite time consuming but it taught me quite a few important lessons about time management and working in synergy with others.

“C”:

I think that Community- Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) is a good opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom into our real life. It is a more practical and interesting learning approach. CBEL helps to clarify the concepts we learned in class and to enhance our understandings. Our project is a good example of CBEL. Before we get into the community kitchens, we didn't know much about the community kitchen. Through online research, we cannot receive too much information about each community kitchen, which makes our

reflective essays very challenging. However, we made observations through community visits and communicated with the workers directly. Group work is always challenging because every group member has their own schedules. Uncertainty was another feeling I had throughout the project, but things always change and we learned to make adjustments accordingly.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Raw data of the six community kitchens

Community Kitchens	Equipment (Has oven, sink, dishwasher, stove, utensils, fuses)	Facilities and Accessibilities (has learning spaces, eating areas, play areas for children, child care facility, accessible parking and bus stops within walking distance)	Usage (has teaching class for food skills, groups to cook together, preparing food for groups that meet on-site, free meals/snacks programs)	Management	Regulation
Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House	Yes (Industrial dishwasher)	Yes	Yes	- A well-established business model helps minimizing the managing time - 10 employees	- There is a food manual, and this kitchen does not accept food donations.
Grandview Calvary Baptist Church	Yes (Industrial dishwasher)	Yes	Yes	- A kitchen oversight committee manages equipment/supplies, and a coordinator is in charge of renting, scheduling and bookings.	- Different damage deposits applied when the kitchen is renting out.
Helping Spirit Lodge Society	Yes (Sink)	Yes	Yes	- One executive director coordinates everything, including scheduling, grocery shopping and cooking	- Only basic rule of cleanliness and keep everything during business hours.
REACH Community Health Center	Yes (Domestic dishwasher)	Yes except no play areas for children and childcare facility	Yes	- Hired facilitators of programs and internal coordinators for managing kitchen conditions.	- Restricted to public use and mostly used for cooking programs. need to consider patients from medical and dental clinics, who are possibly sensitive to smell.
City Reach Care Society	Yes (Industrial dishwasher)	Yes except no childcare facility	Yes	- This organization is owned by Broadway Church. The facility manager from Broadway church will oversee the equipment if there is any needed to be fixed	- This kitchen is only open to people who are belong to City Reach Care Society and Broadway Church.

Vancouver Native Housing Society	Yes (Industrial dishwasher)	Yes except no play areas for children and childcare facility	No. It is in cooperation with JustCatering organization and only provide meals with its tenants who are enrolled in the meal plans.	- This organization works with JustCatering, who is in charge of all the managements of the kitchen.	- Managers pay high attention to the security and privacy of its tenants.
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