

Little-Mountain Riley Park Community Garden: A Survey of Community Members

LFS 350, University of British Columbia

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Executive Summary

This project was carried out by a group of five students enrolled in LFS350 in conjunction with the Little Mountain Riley Park (LMRP) Neighbourhood Food Network (NFN). NFNs in Vancouver are a component of the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, with the goal of ensuring equitable access to healthy local food, thereby promoting food security (City of Vancouver, 2012). The LMRPNFN is acquiring space in the Fall of 2016 to build an accessible and inclusive community garden in the LMRP area (Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). As the LMRP area is socioeconomically and ethnically diverse, special considerations must be taken to ensure that residents are able to access the garden's services to the best of their ability (City of Vancouver, 2011; Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). The goal of this project was to identify demographic specific barriers to participation in the LMRP community garden in order to ensure equitable access to garden services by LMRP community members.

The main objectives of this project were to design, distribute, and analyze data from a survey completed by community members identified as part of populations of particular interest by our community partner, Joanne MacKinnon. These populations included elderly, newcomer, and low-income groups. We utilized a mixed methods approach for this survey, collecting quantitative data through our ten-item survey and qualitative through both speaking with community members and providing some open-ended response questions within the survey. The questions that our survey was answering were as follows:

1. What programs based at the community garden would be most beneficial for the elderly, newcomers and low-income populations?

2. What potential barriers do the elderly, newcomers and low-income populations of LMRP anticipate to their participations in the community garden?

From analyzing our survey data, community members were most interested in the socialization and learning aspects of the garden, with a notable lack of interest in gardening itself. In terms of demographic specific barriers to participation, language and lack of free time were the most frequently reported. In consideration of our project findings, we suggest the following:

1. Continue to focus on the socialization aspect of the garden.
2. Provide garden services in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish where possible.
3. Keep garden activities and services low or no-cost.
4. Offer a shuttle service to and from the garden for participants with accessibility issues.

We hope that our data and suggestions may be used by the LMRPNFN to allow the increased participation of key populations in the LMRP area.

Introduction

Background & Context

For this project a group of five LFS 350 students worked with Joanne MacKinnon from the Little-Mountain Riley Park (LMRP) Neighbourhood Food Network (NFN) to survey populations identified by Joanne as key (i.e., elderly, newcomer, and low-income community members). This survey data was designed to gauge the interest of the key populations in the community garden being established in Fall 2016. Both NFNs and community gardens are considered “food assets” as a part of the Vancouver Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (VGCAP) (City of Vancouver, 2012).

As LMRP is an economically and culturally diverse neighbourhood, it is critical to ensure that food assets established in the area allow equitable access by identifying demographic specific barriers to their utilization (City of Vancouver, 2011; Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). The LMRP community garden is meant to be an inclusive and accessible food asset for the LMRP community members (Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). It will also act as a place of socialization and community building, replacing the former Riley Park Community Centre (personal communication, 2016). This community centre was described as the “heart and soul” of LMRP, especially for the key populations identified above – thus, it is vital to ensure that the LMRP community garden is accessible by these populations (Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). This project focused on generating knowledge on the interests and barriers of access the key populations may face in participating in the LMRP community garden. This data may be used to allow equitable access to the garden services and in the development of an inclusive education plan.

Significance

While the establishment of a community garden aligns with the goals of the VGCAP, it is vital to ensure that established food assets allow equitable access. A 2011 study found that there is a major discrepancy between community garden participation and census data in Vancouver (Seto, 2011). Of our key populations, visible minority, non-English speaking, and low-income groups were underrepresented in community garden participation (Seto, 2011). For immigrants and visible minorities, community gardens are spaces where they can enact, remember, revive, and discover their cultural identities (Shan and Walter, 2015). As community members grow older their mental health can diminish, they can feel social isolation and disconnected from their communities (Donino, Savina, & Cannella, 2003). As Brownie found, this isolation is a social determinant that contributes to the high prevalence of senior malnutrition (2006). With our data, we hope that it may be possible to identify routes through which key population participation and use of community food assets may be promoted in order to continue to build community food security in LMRP.

Project Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

1. Create and administer a survey targeted to elderly, newcomer, and low-income community members in the LMRP area.
2. To help direct the LMRP NFN in facilitating greater participation in the community garden for the key populations through data analysis of the aforementioned survey.
3. To determine what barriers to access the key populations may experience in accessing the garden.

Ultimately, these objectives are meant to aid Joanne and her team in understanding the demographic specific barriers and needs that must be addressed to allow optimal participation of the key LMRP populations in the community garden.

Inquiry Questions

The following inquiry questions, chosen through communication with Joanne, were answered over the course of our project:

1. What programs based at the community garden would be most beneficial for the elderly, newcomers and low-income populations?
2. What potential barriers do the elderly, newcomers and low-income populations of LMRP anticipate to their participations in the community garden?



Systems Diagram

At the beginning of the semester we made a system diagram for our project in relation to LMRP community garden. The outermost factors that affect the community garden are the seeds and supplies produced by outside sources and surrounding farms, the Vancouver School Board, government aid and policy, the VGCAP, other NFNs, and key community members who are involved in the creation of the community garden. At the core of the project is the garden infrastructure and the support from local businesses. Overall a key component we left out was the key participants who would benefit the most from the community garden. Throughout the project evolution we learned the importance of what the garden could mean to them.

Methods

Data Collection Approach & Procedures

We created a 10-item survey, with an additional open-ended question for participants to add extra comments. By collecting both quantitative survey responses and qualitative verbal data and survey responses, we utilized a mixed-methods approach to data collection. The survey included questions related to age, interests, language needs and potential barriers to accessing the garden (please see “Appendix 1” to view the survey). We attended three events communicated to us by our community partner that were identified as key. We attended these events over a period of four days, from March 4th to March 8th, 2016. At these events, the paper-based surveys

were administered in either English or Mandarin. In some cases, we had community members verbally translate surveys for those who were not able to read or speak English or Mandarin. At the events, groups members handed the surveys to participants after obtaining verbal informed consent. At this point, they remained nearby to answer questions relating to the survey. We obtained qualitative data from both written survey responses to the open-ended question and through conversations with participants.

Analysis

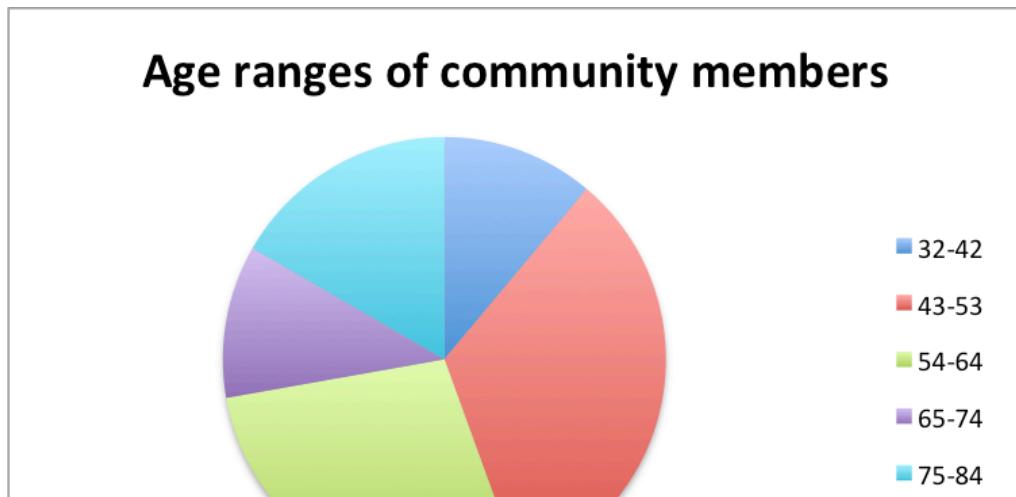
The completed survey raw data was inputted into Excel. We were then able to observe any trends in our data. A number of charts were created for ease of viewing the analyzed data, included in “Results”.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to being given the survey, participants were given full disclosure of our project. This was to ensure that they were able to make an informed decision regarding whether they wished to participate (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014). This included explaining the purpose behind the survey, that we were students from UBC, and that the survey was completely voluntary and anonymous. We did not collect any identifying information in the survey and obtained verbal consent so we did not need consent forms in accordance with TCPS 2 (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014). Consent was given voluntarily and the participants could withdraw their consent at any time (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014).

Results

From attending the three aforementioned community events, we obtained a total of 18 survey responses. From the survey data we identified results depicted in Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4 as

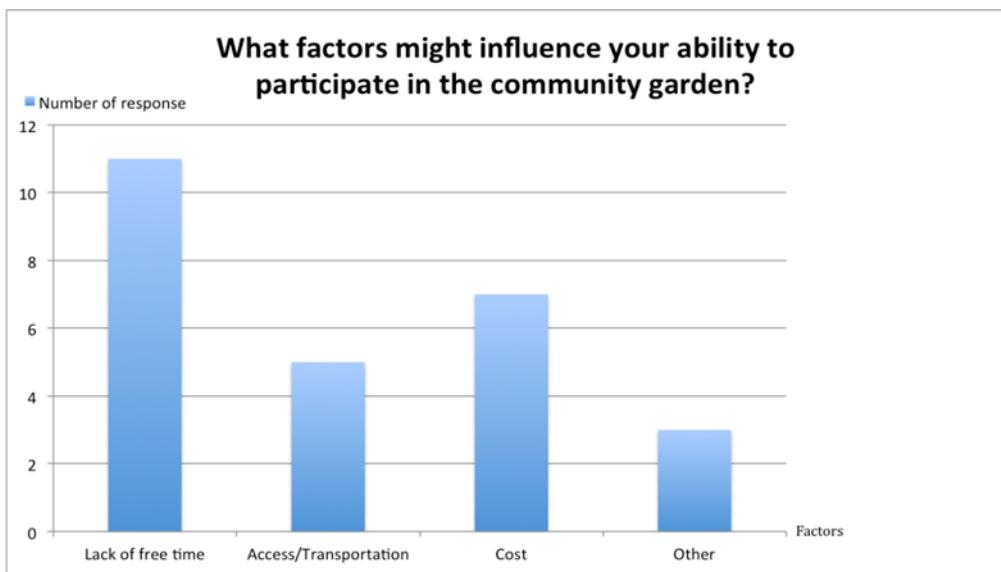


most key in answering our inquiry questions.

From Figure 1 it can be seen that half of the surveyed community members were between 43-64.

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Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin were the languages most needed by those surveyed.

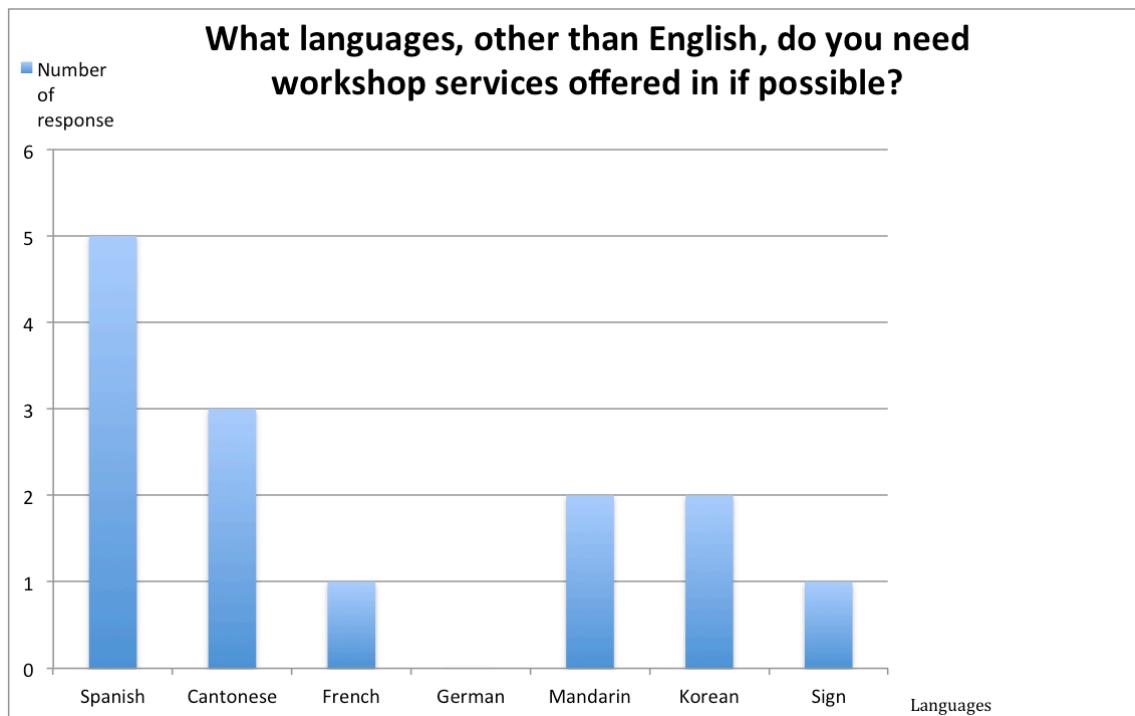


Figure 3

Figure 3

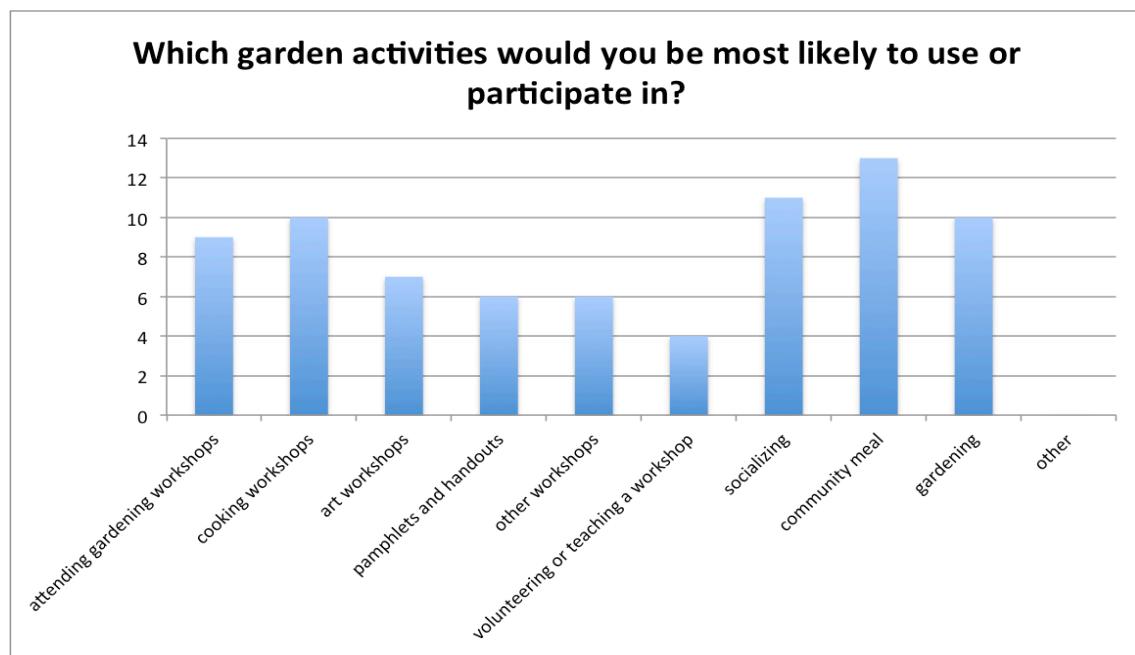


Figure 4

highlights the varied language needs of the surveyed community members. Spanish and Cantonese were the most requested languages to offer garden services in.

Feedback demonstrated lack of free time (42% of the responses) and cost (27%) as the two main reasons that might prevent the survey participants from participating in the garden services. Participants were asked to choose as many options as they liked for this question.

Interest varied between community members. From our data, activities related to socialization (i.e., community meal, socializing) and education (i.e., workshops, pamphlets and handouts) were selected by almost all community members, demonstrating an interest in the supplemental non-gardening activities that the garden may offer. Volunteering was not of interest to many community members. Through conversing with a survey participant, it was noted that this was due to a lack of free time rather than lack of interest alone.

Through both analysis of qualitative survey data and conversing with survey participants, an interest in making the garden wheelchair accessible was noted. In order to allow accessibility, survey participants suggested that wider pathways and raised garden beds would be beneficial.

Discussion

From surveying our community members, we were able to both complete our project objectives and provide answers to our inquiry questions. Objective 1 – to create and administer a survey targeted at the key LMRP populations – allowed us to address the question of Objective 2, which related to analyzing survey data to allow these populations to participate in the community garden. We found that survey participants would be more likely to participate in the community garden if activities and services related to socialization and education were provided. Community meals and workshops were popular with participants, cementing the knowledge communicated to us by Joanne that the reaches of this garden will extend beyond providing food alone (personal communication, 2016).

To address Objective 3 – identifying barriers to participation in the garden – we directed our attention to both qualitative data and quantitative data seen in Figures 2 and 3. Language, lack of free time, wheelchair access, and transportation may be the biggest barriers to the participation of key populations. Unfortunately, lack of free time may not be a factor that is able to be addressed by the garden organizers. However, we suggest that future surveys may inquire as to whether there are ways that this squeeze on time can be addressed to allow community members to participate.

In light of our results, there are some limitations to our data collection approach. Due to time constraints, we were only able to obtain 18 survey results. However, as our data is in line with the knowledge communicated to us by Joanne about what the garden would require to promote access, our results may accurately represent the needs of the key populations (personal communication, 2016).

The identification of demographic specific barriers to community garden participation is an important step in promoting diverse and inclusive engagement. Previously, alternative food systems (such as community gardens) have been found to have a lack of diversity in participation (Seto, 2011). Through utilization of garden and community assets, the LMRP garden may be able to use the barriers identified in Objective 3 to promote the participation of the key populations in the garden. Workman noted that participants in a community garden felt that it allowed people of different generations, ages, and cultures to interact (2013). Appropriately directing the LMRP garden services may eventually allow for a greater demographic and cultural diversity than has thus far been observed in Vancouver.

The original objective of this project was to create a set of criteria that would then be used to identify appropriate workshops for the LMRP community garden. In retrospect, our original project aligned with a traditional needs-based approach to community development (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). This project involved our group approaching the community as outsiders in an academic context. Needs-based approaches to community development may be perceived as inherently negative by the community members they are affecting (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). Conversely, asset-based community development approaches differ in that they focus on the assets already possessed by the communities being focused on (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). Through placing the knowledge of the community members of what they required from the garden at the forefront of our project development we were able to use an asset-based community development approach (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

A major component of Hamm and Bellow's definition of community food security is having access to food that is nutritionally adequate (2003). It is a primary objective of the LMRP community garden organizers to give the food grown in the garden to the key LMRP

populations (Joanne MacKinnon, personal communication, 2016). Diseases related to nutritional inadequacy disproportionately affect those who are lower-income or in poverty (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010; Tanumihardjo, 2007). Furthermore, malnutrition is prevalent in elderly populations (Brownie, 2006). Providing routes for those who are of lower-income status or elderly to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet can thus be considered to contribute to community food security. As Brownie noted, one of the social determinants that may contribute to elderly malnutrition is the lack of opportunity to eat and share meals with other (2006). The community meals that were identified as of interest in Figure 4 may provide an opportunity to remove this socially determined barrier to obtaining adequate diet.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the results of our survey are indicative of the needs for certain concessions to be made in order to allow the key LMRP populations to optimally participate in the garden. Our key finding highlighting this conclusion was the expressed need for garden services to be offered in languages other than English. To further increase access, both Joanne and some community members spoke of the need to make the garden wheelchair accessible. Community members appeared to be interested in at least one of activities pertaining to education or socialization.

While there were certainly key patterns identified, the low survey response rate does leave us with a key question: are these data generalizable to the LMRP key populations as a whole? While we were able to interact with community members at three community events identified as key by Joanne, we suggest that future LFS 350 groups continue this process of surveying community members. This will allow for a greater response rate, thereby ensuring greater confidence in the survey results.

In order to continue to foster community food security, the garden organizers can continue to address the demographic specific barriers to accessing the garden services. Providing garden services in languages other than English where possible will allow the development of an inclusive place to socialize. Allowing for opportunities to participate in socialization and community meals can further allow for inclusivity, as well as promotion of food security for seniors (Workman, 2013; Brownie, 2006).

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Critical Reflections

Below, a critical reflection on this project from each group member (Student 1 – 5) is included.

Student 1

I found the CBEL project challenging due to the fact we were interacting with not only our group and others but also people in the community who were expecting something useful from our project. Communication was the biggest issue for our project in my opinion and my main takeaway from the CBEL experience was the importance of keeping everyone involved, especially the community partner, informed. It was easy for our group to stay in touch and although we all came from different disciplines, we all had the common bond of the course and school, however it was more challenging to make our objectives clear with our community partner who approached the project from a much different viewpoint.

The flexible learning aspect of the course was incredibly useful. It made planning meetings and attending events easier and ensured a time that everyone could attend. Despite not meeting up in plenary or tutorial sessions every week we were able to stay on track and communicate with each other. Working as a group on the blog posts, especially with the accomplishments and weekly objectives sections, forced us to check in with our project and provided a reflection on what we had done so far, which may not have otherwise happened. After attending the community events that we survey I realized how important the CBEL projects are and it was very valuable as student to see how our work can contribute to more than just a course mark at the end of the semester.

Student 2

I found the flexible learning experiences to be the most beneficial aspect of the course. The availability of “class time” that could be used to focus on the CBEL project was greatly

appreciated and needed and helped relieve some of the stress I was feeling due to a full course load, and three other group projects. The blog posts forced our group to communicate with each other about how we were feeling and where we believed the project would be headed. This allowed us to better understand how each other were feeling and kept us in contact when we were not in classes. Overall the group work was not unlike other courses I have taken at University. If you can learn to work with one another's strengths and be understanding of the timelines others work on it can be beneficial for all group members.

The most important skill I will take away from this project is the importance of being concise and organized during email conversations. Our conversations with our community partner became unclear and confusing due to various emails, forwards, replies and "cc's" on emails she had with other members of the community garden project. It took me a few weeks to be able to pick out the importance of each email. I learned how to better organize and respond to emails as well, and especially what not to do. Being short and concise in emails, and asking specific questions was the most beneficial for our group.

Student 3

I found that the skills of how to collaborate with other people was very important by getting involved in the CBEL project, since we were not only working with our group members who came from different majors, but we were also collaborating with our community partners and community members with a wide range of different backgrounds. And where I learned most about the significance of the skills of collaboration was by attending different community events. It gave me an overview about how the community worked, which was very different from my imagination, and a better understanding about the community that our project was working on is very helpful to achieve the goals of our project. Since we shifted our project focus in the middle,

it was extremely important to stay concise and keep in touch with our community partners in order to make the collaboration successful, thus allowing both of our groups and our community partners to gain something useful from this project.

Also, to solve the challenges that we were facing during the project, flexible learning has been greatly helpful for our group to find out the solutions towards the issues. Different than other courses that I have taken that have a fixed timetable, flexible learning sessions allowed us to schedule our meetings based on our group members' convenience and the project progress. The CBEL project overall was incredibly valuable to me because it gave me an opportunity to collaborate with different people through community-based activities.

Student 4

The way the project and classes are structured gave us the flexibility to work with not only the community partners but with our teams. Since our course and outside of school obligations varied greatly, this made the project more feasible. Without the flexible learning schedule, my engagement with the course would likely be not as deep and definitely be more challenging. I enjoyed working on our CBEL project as it gave me a sense of what it is like to be a part of a community project in Vancouver.

We were introduced to the community partner and community members that really showed passion for the development of the community garden and the workshops it will provide. This made the project more tangible and realistic unlike most other course projects. It made me realize the project not only for my own learning but was going to make an impact on the community members in the city. In retrospect, it's interesting to realize our experience hit many of emotional highs and lows and even a significant scope change where we realized as a group our goals were not developed through an asset based community development lens. All of this

made the project much more impactful on my learning and I am grateful to finish with the ability to articulate the significance of this project and a greater understanding on community food security.

Student 5

I enjoyed having the opportunity this semester to learn through the CBEL project rather than in a traditional classroom learning. I feel that the CBEL project allowed me to get a better handle on the complexities of community food security than if I had simply just written a paper and had an exam for this course. Interacting with the community members while administering the surveys was a really valuable and memorable experience, and made the completion of the data analysis and report much more rewarding for me. I also really appreciated the opportunity to work with my group and community partner. While at times we felt challenged and lost, I think that these challenges were ultimately important to my learning for this class. Before this project, I had never really experienced the feelings of failure in a professional setting that I did at certain points this term. Being challenged in a learning environment with the support of my group members, teaching team, and community partner makes me feel equipped to handle the stress of future failures and challenges in my future academic and career pursuits.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Survey

The Little Mountain Riley Park Community Garden will be planted in Spring 2017 at 30th and Ontario, on the site of the previous community centre. We want to ensure that the garden is inclusive and accessible for everyone. The purpose of this survey is to gather insights from community members to make this possible. Your participation will greatly help us in recognizing the priorities of the community.

Please indicate your age. Choose one.

- 20 years or under
- 21-31 years
- 32-42 years
- 43-53 years
- 54-64 years
- 65-74 years
- 75-84 years
- 85 and over

What is your ethnicity? Choose all that apply.

- Aboriginal origins
- African origins
- Central or South American origins
- East and Southeast Asian origins
- European origins
- Other, please specify:

What language(s), other than English, do you need workshop services offered in if possible? Choose all that apply.

- Aboriginal languages, please specify:
- Cantonese
- French
- German
- Mandarin
- Punjabi
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Other, please specify:

Why would you be interested in the community garden? Choose all that apply.

- Build relationships with fellow community members
- Exercise
- Connect with nature
- To learn about gardening
- To learn how to utilize produce/food grown
- Free/affordable availability to fresh produce
- Other, please specify:

What factors might influence your ability to participate in the community garden? Choose all that apply.

- Lack of free time
- Access/transportation
- Cost

- Other, please specify: _____

If transportation is an issue, would a shuttle service to and from the garden improve your availability to access it? Choose one.

- Yes
 No

Please flip over to continue the survey.

If you have a disability that may impact your ability to participate in the garden to the degree that you would like, please indicate below what services should be provided to assist you.

If you have children 19 years or younger that you think may wish to participate in the garden, please indicate their age. If not, do not answer this question.

- 0-4 years
 5-9 years
 10-14 years
 15-19 years

Which garden activities would you be most likely to use or participate in? Choose all that apply.

- Educational programs and materials (if this option is selected, please choose from the programs below)
- Attending gardening workshops
 - Attending cooking workshops
 - Attending art workshops
 - Pamphlets and handouts
 - Attending other workshops:
 - Volunteering or teaching a workshop
 - Other, please explain:
- Socializing
 Community meal
 Gardening
 Other, please explain:

*Workshops would be provided at set times throughout the week/month where community members can learn/work on skills together for a set time (approx. 1-2 hours).

Please select date(s) and time(s) that are most suitable for you to participate in garden activities.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Please feel free to use the blank space below if you have any additional comments.
Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2 – Survey Responses

Please indicate your age. Choose one.	
20 or younger	0
21-31	0
32-42	2
43-53	6
54-64	5
65-74	2
75-84	3
85+	0

What is your ethnicity? Choose all that apply.	
Aboriginal origins	3
African origins	1
Central or South American origins	6
East and Southeast Asian origins	7
European origins	4
Other, please specify	1 (Canadian)

What language(s), other than English, do you need workshop services offered in if possible? Choose all that apply.	
Aboriginal languages, please specify:	0
Cantonese	3
French	1
German	0
Mandarin	2
Punjabi	0
Spanish	5
Tagalog	0
Vietnamese	0
Other, please specify:	2 (Sign language, dialect unspecified; Korean)

Why would you be interested in the community garden? Choose all that apply.	
Build relationships with fellow community members	7
Exercise	5
Connect with nature	6
To learn about gardening	12
To learn how to utilize produce/food grown	10
Free/affordable availability to fresh produce	15

Other, please specify:	1 (relaxation)
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What factors might influence your ability to participate in the community garden? Choose all that apply.

Lack of free time	11
Access/transportation	5
Cost	7
Other:	3 (live too far)

If transportation is an issue, would a shuttle service to and from the garden improve your availability to access it? Choose one.

Yes	8
No	4

If you have a disability that may impact your ability to participate in the garden to the degree that you would like, please indicate below what services should be provided to assist you.

Raised beds and wide walkways for wheelchair accessibility, no bending
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If you have children 19 years or younger that you think may wish to participate in the garden, please indicate their age. If not, do not answer this question.

0-4	1
5-9	1
10-14	0
15-19	1

Which garden activities would you be most likely to use or participate in? Choose all that apply.

Attending gardening workshops	9
Attending cooking workshops	10
Attending art workshops	7
Pamphlets and handouts	6
Attending other workshops:	6 (language learning and teaching, practicing skills)
Volunteering or teaching a workshop	4
Other, please explain:	0
Socializing	11
Community meal	13
Gardening	10
Other, please explain:	1 (clubs)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
Afternoon	1	0	1	0	2	2	3
Evening	4	4	3	4	4	4	5