

LFS 350

Gordon Neighbourhood House:

Community Food Hub Helpers Project Report

Group 13

University of British Columbia

## **Introduction**

The Gordon Neighbourhood House's (GNH) Community Food Hub Program is a prime example of how increased food literacy skills can bring both health and social benefits and improve community food security. Community food security is achieved when, through a sustainable, self-reliant, and socially just food system, every individual within a community has access to food that is safe, culturally acceptable, and nutritionally adequate (Hamm and Bellows, 2003). One way to move towards community food security is through projects and programs related to cooking skills or nutrition education with limited resources – programs similar to our food preservation and storage workshops (Hamm and Bellows, 2003). GNH's goal is to fortify community resilience through asset-based skill building which allows community members to take charge of their own food security. Physical and social barriers may prevent low-income individuals from accessing or making use of charitable services (Kissane, 2003). Food literacy allows individuals to utilize the services already available to their fullest extent, building on these community assets (Cullen, Hatch, Martin, Higgins, & Sheppard, 2015). The main foci of the food literacy workshops are food preservation and storage because this will help community members prolong the shelf life of their produce and save money by reducing food waste (Kempson, Keenan, Sadani, Ridlen, & Rosato, 2002).

GNH is located in the West End of downtown Vancouver. This densely populated, residential community has a much higher percentage of people aged 20-39 and a smaller average household size compared to Vancouver overall (City of Vancouver, 2012). As such, individuals in this area may be faced with the challenge of preparing food for themselves without a family support system to rely upon. The workshops are aimed towards addressing the need of

this population and the need previously identified by Food Hub members as something that would be beneficial to them.

### **Significance**

To obtain community food security, GNH strives to create a local sustainable food system that responds to the diverse needs of the community as exemplified by the provision of a social space, educational opportunities, and food services for community members. The significance of our preservation workshop is that it enhances food literacy skills, and encourages self-reliance as it allows for individuals to have more control over their own food security. Our workshops exemplify the various components that encompass food literacy such as but not limited to planning, managing, selecting, preparing, and eating food (Vidgen & Gallegos, 2014). It is important to consider food justice when tackling food security as it allows us to ensure that our efforts are mindful of inequalities, and directed towards low income individuals rather than creating “marginal, safe spaces for the privileged that may simply serve as a bleeder valve for the dominant agrifood system” (Allen, 2008). Food justice specifically focuses on sharing the benefits and disadvantages of a food system equally and democratically between all involved in it (Levkoe, 2006).

### **Objectives & Inquiry Questions**

1. Implement food literacy workshops centered on food preservation methods and storage in order to better understand the context of food literacy within the West-End community.



Figure 1. Engaging with Food Hub member during the first food preservation workshop.



Figure 2. Info-sheets used in the first workshop.

- How effective are the food preservation skills introduced in the food literacy workshops at GNH in terms of the West End community's food security?

### Methods

The six members of the Community Food Hub group were divided into two groups of three individuals. The first workshop was conducted on October 7th, 2016, and the second workshop was on November 4th, 2016. Each group conducted one workshop session spanning the duration of one Food Hub Friday for approximately 4 hours (from 9:30am to 1:30pm). The first workshop taught the community members how to dry herbs, and the second one demonstrated how to prolong food storage.

### Data Collection

After completing the workshop, participants were provided with and asked to complete an anonymous feedback form (see Appendix) that included general demographic and feedback questions. One group member collected and recorded field notes utilizing the basic pen and

paper method. Field notes included both quantitative and qualitative observations about the number of participants that attended the workshop, the number of participants who showed genuine interest in the workshop, and the number of individuals who took workshop info-sheets with them. These data collections were conducted to measure the effectiveness of our workshop in terms of participants' awareness of food literacy.

### **Data Analysis**

Each feedback form question were categorized, tallied and entered into Microsoft Excel. A colour-coded bar graph is subsequently generated to illustrate the relative differences of responses received. Qualitative observations are summarized in the Results sections, and further elaborated in the Discussion.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This project is guided by the principles of Asset-Based-Community-Development which highlights the importance of focusing on the pre-existing assets in the community rather than the deficits (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Because GNH is a respected local Good Food Organization, and already serves a large number of individuals in the West End, their reputation will draw the audience to the food literacy workshops (Community Food Centres Canada, 2015). Ethical considerations for both data gathered through the questionnaires and the observational field notes concern whether consent is required. Field notes are gathered by a non-participatory member of the research group. According to the Government of Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) (2015), because the data obtained through both of these methods does not identify any specific individuals, it therefore does not require consent. Additionally, according to TCPS 2 Article 10.3 (2015), the observation is conducted in an environment where individuals have a limited expectation of privacy.

## Results

After tabulating and analyzing the results, it was found that there were a greater number of people who spoke with us, completed feedback forms, and took info-sheets in the first workshop compared to the second workshop (Figure 3). Across both workshops, a total of 54 people spoke to us, 18 people completed feedback forms, and 25 people took info-sheets.

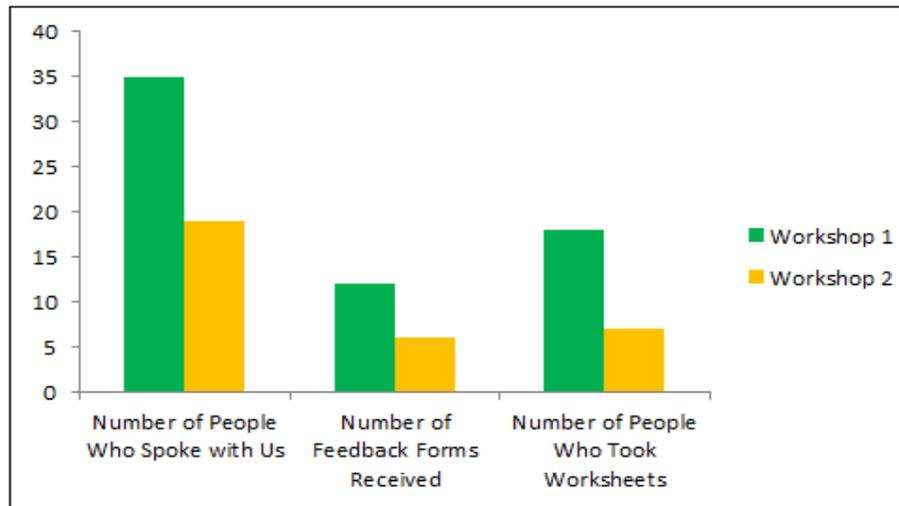


Figure 3: Data Comparison between Workshop 1 (herb drying) and Workshop 2 (storage methods).

Of the total number of feedback forms received, all respondents indicated that they found the workshops to be beneficial. When asked what workshops participants would like to see in the future, the four most salient responses were: cooking tips, growing herbs at home, drying mushrooms, and hands-on experiential workshops. The demographics data showed a higher percentage of people between the ages of 20-39 and a smaller average household. Of the 250-350 patrons that attended the community Food Hub, 35 patrons (12%) attended the first workshop, and 19 patrons (6%) attended the second workshop.

## Discussion

Limitations discussed below demonstrate potential causes as to why attendance of the first workshop might have been higher as well as the low percentage of attendance overall. A limitation of our study was that Food Hub patrons were not aware that we were holding the

workshops. However, one of the techniques that we worked really well in drawing patrons to our herb drying workshop table was putting up a sign by the produce market that said “Free Herbs” directing them to our table. Herbal tea was also offered as another tactic to draw more participants in. One unforeseen limitation was that there were less people willing to fill out feedback forms compared to the number of people who participated in our workshop. However, over the course of the workshop, we found that some participants were more willing to complete the feedback form when we sat down, and went through the form with them. Therefore, we recommend that future workshop facilitators employ similar techniques to increase workshop participation and feedback. Furthermore, we found that people were unaware of our second workshop because our setup was perceived as an extension of the produce market rather than a food storage workshop. Some suggestions for future workshop facilitators is to create a workshop sign for the table, or have posters that notify community members of upcoming workshops.

### **Conclusion**

Our project has shown that those who have participated in our food literacy workshops found them to be beneficial. This demonstrates that the needs of the community were effectively assessed, and provision of such workshops through community food centres is encouraged as a means of asset building amongst community members. Previously, the basic needs and areas of wanted help had been addressed; however, food literacy was overlooked. By implementing our workshops, we have been able to address this gap which further emphasizes what the West End community requires, and would like to see more of.

While our workshops were successful, future students building on this project should continue to explore how to engage more workshop participants. This will also allow for groups

to collect more data on methods to improve workshop delivery and content. From here, we would like to make sure that our findings are made available to these groups and to GNH, so that it can be used to make other initiatives more effective for the West End community and the Food Hub program. In conclusion, while our data provided valuable information about the effectiveness of our workshops, our qualitative observations exposed just how complex the issues people face are that prevent them from achieving food security. To be more effective, we should not just try to teach, as this is a deficit-based approach, but to also have a conversation, provide resources, and listen because we ended up learning a lot from the community members.

### **Critical Reflections**

#### **Student 1**

For me, our CBEL project and LFS 350 played a critical role in the trajectory of my time at UBC. I was discouraged at the end of last term and almost did not return to school. I did not feel as if there was meaning to school work nor that it would ever translate into real life skills that I could use to help make the changes I want to see in my community and beyond. Getting into the community, sharing knowledge, having my eyes opened to important issues, and working together with like-minded people has made my CBEL experience a source of inspiration and a reminder as to why I am really here at UBC, as well as how much of a privilege it is. Julian Napoleon, Paul Taylor (director of Gordon Neighborhood House), and some remarkable community members humbled me as to the gravity of current issues of our food system and at the same time made me desperate to make a difference. Overall I have realized change is difficult. It cannot be done alone and comes in small steps. It requires constant scope change, zooming out to see the big picture and be inspired by the goal and major issue, and zooming back in to collaborate and identify specific steps that need to be taken. After our project

and this course I feel able to finish my degree with meaning and be a part of the change I want to see in our current systems.

### **Student 2**

Our CBEL project was an opportunity to be part of an educational project to improve food literacy at Gordon Neighbourhood House in Vancouver West End area. During this project, we were given the chance to work as a team, and help to educate the community at Gordon House about the methods and skills of food storage and preservation. Interacting with people who worked at Gordon Neighbourhood House was a motivation for us to help people in the risk of food insecurity. We would be able to recognize how appreciative the people were at the Gordon House for having access to affordable culturally appropriate healthy food at their community. People enthusiastically participated in our educational workshops, and wanted to know more about healthy food choices and the preservation methods. As a team, we shared our experience and knowledge that we gained during this project in our blogs, and final report. Our blogs and final report helped our group to be on the same page, and get the most out of this journey. During this project, we found out food literacy can help people to understand the effects of healthy food on their individual and social health and wellbeing. We learnt that food literacy can encourage people to eat healthy, and help a community to move toward a sustainable food system.

### **Student 3**

This CBEL project has been a tremendous learning experience in that I have encountered instances of challenges with having to deal with uncertainty, unexpected changes, new experiences, and workload balance. The flexible learning sessions was a new experience for me because the onus was on me, in terms of how I wanted to allocate that time period to assist my

learning. The use of a blog post to report the progress of the CBEL project was also a new experience for me. Coupled with the fact that the blog was to be completed as a group assignment, it was a challenging new experience.

I think with any group project, the beginning is always the hardest because not only did I have to figure out how to go about the project, I also didn't know the capabilities of my fellow group members. One of the biggest challenges, in regards to this CBEL project was allocating time to complete all the assignments associated with it. Although we were given flexible learning sessions to work on our projects, we still had articles to read and quizzes to complete. The biggest reward of this project is being able to contribute my skills and knowledge to the community.

Moving forward, the combined experiences gained from this project, the group work, and the flexible learning sessions will help me be a much more capable person in other courses and especially in the workplace because the real world will be filled with unexpected challenges.

#### **Student 4**

Going through the process of the CBEL project has been a fulfilling experience, but has not been without its fair share of struggles and difficulties. Although undergoing such a creative project allowed me to partake in a hands-on learning experience, it also exposed me to a more real-life scenario in which plenty can go wrong without the support system of the university. I was able to better understand how to approach community members in a professional manner when working collaboratively to achieve a common goal. Additionally, as time progressed, I became more familiar with my team's dynamic and overall personalities, which allowed us to work in a more unison manner to complete group work. In terms of the flexible learning experiences, I thought they were very critical in order to accomplish the demanding nature of a

community-based project as it allotted a time where all group members were free to meet and go over necessary details pertaining to the project and future tasks. The flexible sessions also provided us with time to meet with our community group partners and further delve into the CBEL project and its required workshops. I would personally say that such sessions are necessary when dealing with a community based experience as it requires more time and effort to be implemented. It was very beneficial for us to finalize our findings through data assessment within our final project as it further emphasized our objectives and results garnered through this process.

### **Student 5**

The CBEL project has been challenging for me, as it requires more problem-solving skills, responsibility and commitment by dealing with real life situations. Despite the challenges, I find myself enjoying in the project and believe that the knowledge and experience gained through CBEL are tremendously valuable for my future studies and career. During the tutorials, we have worked together to generate ideas and achieve the shared goals. Working together as a team and increasing group cohesion throughout the project are particularly important to create meaningful outcomes to the community. We had contacted each other frequently to follow the same path and make sure to be on the same page at each stage of the project.

Moreover, immersing myself in new learning environment was the most significant event in this course. Writing blogs, participating in collaborative community-based project, and utilizing ABCD approaches were all new experiences; these learning opportunities would facilitate practical knowledge and allow me to develop a course of action and address food systems challenges. We used the flexible learning sessions efficiently to write blogs and map out a plan for our projects. Finally, the final report and the presentation were crucial to finalize our

project, as we could evaluate and document the issues, significance, approaches, findings and implications of our project.

### **Student 6**

My experience at the Gordon Neighbourhood House was very rewarding as it has taught me that you can learn a lot yourself through teaching others. After I had read the community project's description, I had a clear plan in regards to what I wanted to do and what I had to do. However, after arriving at the neighbourhood house, I found that at times people weren't interested in what I was doing but rather just needed someone to talk to. Through these conversations, I was able to learn a thing or two on the topic that I had initially come to present. This demonstrated that it was important to listen to the people you want to help before helping them. This insight I gained will prepare me for future workshop developments as I am more confident in the fact that I will be able to more effectively target my future audience.

Moving forward, one thing I would like to highlight is that through completing LFS 350 I have become much better at effectively handling different group dynamics. I feel that this is a very useful skill as it will help me in the working world where I will most likely be expected to work with many other people.

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## Appendix

### Sample Participant Feedback Form

|   |                                  |                                  |                                       |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Sex:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Male    | <input type="checkbox"/> Female  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other        |
| 2. Age:   | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 – 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and older |
| 3. How many people are living in your household?  |                                  |                                  |                                       |
| 4. How many children (14 years and under) are living in your household?   |                                  |                                  |                                       |
| 5. Are the resources provided by the Food Bank sufficient for your household until the next week/Food Bank event? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes     | <input type="checkbox"/> No      |                                       |
| 6. How many times a week do you worry about your next meal?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Never   | <input type="checkbox"/> 1–3     | <input type="checkbox"/> 4–6          |
|   |                                  |                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 7+           |
| 7. Did you find today's workshop beneficial/helpful?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes     | <input type="checkbox"/> No      | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat     |
| 8. Is language an issue in the workshops?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes     | <input type="checkbox"/> No      |                                       |
| 9. What future workshops would you like to see?   |                                  |                                  |                                       |
| 10. If you could change something from today's workshop what would it be?   |                                  |                                  |                                       |