

## Project Proposal

### **Purpose**

The purpose of our project is to further the Gordon Neighbourhood House's Food Hub (GNH) mandate of providing empowered and dignified access to food. We seek to address issues of food literacy in an inclusive, culturally appropriate manner as well as create a platform for community dialogue and engagement around food security and food literacy.

### **Significance**

The low state of food security in Vancouver's West End relative to city average highlights the significance of the project (Broughton et al., 2006). Community food security is defined as a food system that is removed from state control, is environmentally sustainable and collectively imagined. Community food security works to provide equitable access to nutritionally and culturally relevant foods (Anderson & Cook, 1999). The traditional Food Bank distribution model fails to give agency to the communities that rely on it, creating an environment that is not dignified, welcoming, nor empowering (Ronson & Caraher, 2015). The Food Hub attempts to address this by creating access to Food Bank goods through models of self-determination. This is done through the inclusion of a "grocery store style" food distribution model, which allows clients to acquire the groceries that they prefer; a low cost produce market; and a by-donation-lunch. Furthermore, the soup kitchen in the Food Hub aims to promote a multifunctional usable space through providing food as well as an area for socialising and communication.

The term 'food literacy' holds multiple definitions and is a topic of continued research. Cullen et al. (2015) propose a definition of food literacy as a "*positive relationship built through social, cultural, and environmental experiences with food, enabling people to make decisions that support health*". The Expert and Young People's Studies (Vidgen and Gallegos, 2014) identify the components of food literacy as (1) planning and managing, (2) selecting, (3) preparing, and (4) eating the food, as shown in Figure 1. Food literacy is an aspect of the Food Hub that could be further expanded to inspire participants to create a positive relationship and uplifting memories with food.

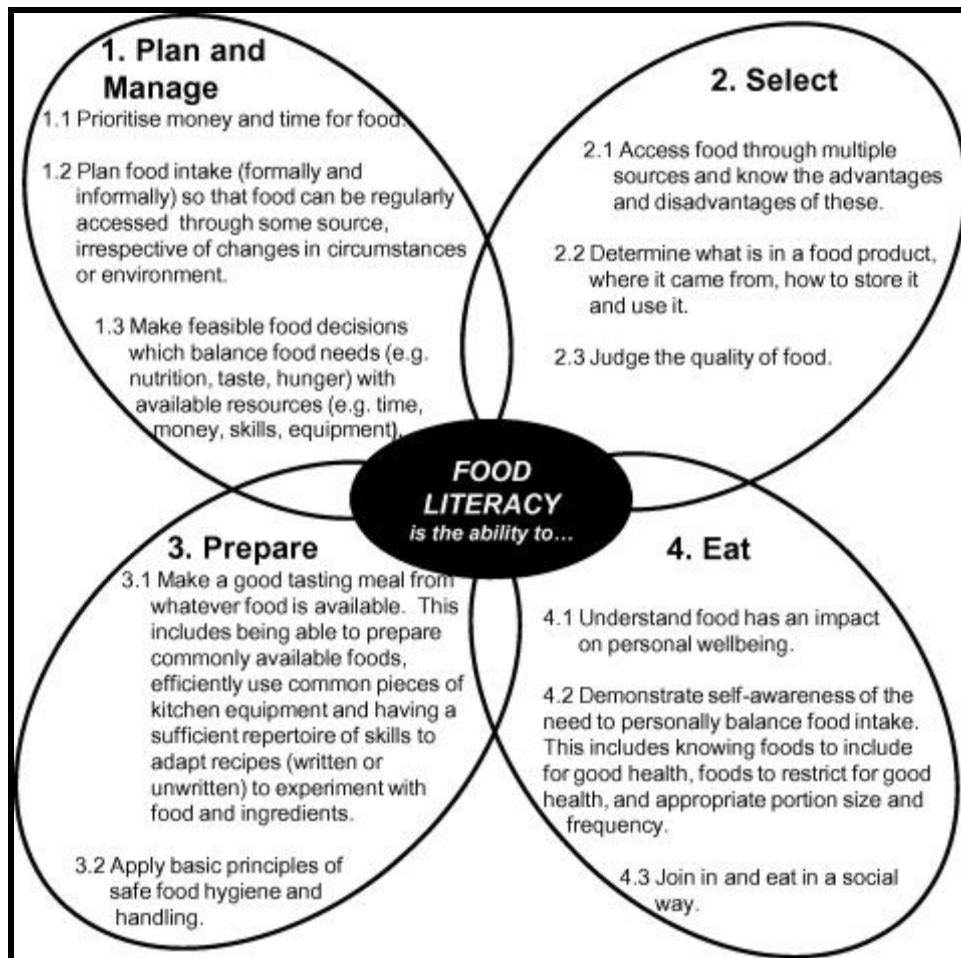


Figure 1. The eleven components of food literacy derived from the Expert and Young People's Studies.

### Objectives + Inquiry Questions

Our objective is to assess and enhance food literacy in the West End. We aim to engage in conversations with patrons of GNH Food Hub about their relationships with and memories of food. We aim to create a collection of stories and recipes that can be shared with all visitors of the GNH in the form of a book. We hope that by creating this deliverable that is centred around recipe-sharing and storytelling, we would be furthering food literacy in the West End in an easily-consumable, inclusive, and culturally appropriate way. It is our wish that the book would spark intercultural dialogue and forge personal connections through using the common denominator that connects all of us - food.

We also hope to create a space for the continuation of this book in the future, allowing for stories and recipes to be added as they are collected. We hope that this that will not only further and strengthen food literacy, food security, food preparation and storage skills associated with common Food Hub donation items, but also utilize food as a social medium to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. Additionally, it draws upon the strengths of the community and incites long-term community engagement in furthering food literacy as it is a collection of stories and recipes from the community, to the community.

## Research Questions

- 1) What are the strengths of the current Food Hub program and how can they be utilized to further the GNH mandate of providing welcoming and dignified access to food?
- 2) How can we use the strength of the community to further food literacy, using GNH as the physical and social space to do so?

## Background and context

The West End is one of Vancouver's most densely populated neighbourhoods, with 216.9 persons per hectare. The unemployment rate rests at 5.7%, slightly lower than city average. The average rent for a one bedroom apartment is CAD \$106 higher than city average. Median household income is lower in the West End (CAD \$38,581) than the city median income (CAD \$47,299). This is reflected in the percentage of the population in low income households, which is higher in the West End (32.8% low income) than the city average (26.6% low income) (City of Vancouver, 2012). From these statistics, we gather that the lack of affordable housing and the high percentage of low income households combine to create increased vulnerability to food insecurity in the West End population.

The Gordon Neighbourhood House is located in the heart of the West End. GNH has a similar function to a community center however, rather than merely providing services to the community, GNH focuses on engagement of community members by offering an array of free or inexpensive programs that aim to meet "*the needs and dreams of the community*" (Gordon Neighbourhood House, 2017). Many of these activities are food-related, and free/inexpensive meals are often used as a way to incite attendance. In extension, food provides a vector for intercultural dialogue, community strengthening, and bonding between attendees; further highlighting the multifunctionality of food.



Figure 2. Map of the West End and neighbouring districts (City of Vancouver, 2012).

## Methods

We plan to interview community members and patrons of the GNH Food Hub in order to collect recipes and associated stories that are significant to them. We will initially engage participants in this process by creating a space for them to collaborate with us. We will set up a table and distribute simple breakfast muffins with an attached recipe as a point of interaction. We will advertise our project at this table to solicit contributions.

We will compile these recipes and stories into a community cookbook. This cookbook will be distributed at the Food Hub to foster a collaborative sense of engagement and purpose in the existing programming, allowing patrons to creatively contribute to existing programming. This exercise will further food literacy amongst patrons and participants over the long term. The book will be made available for the GNH to make future edits to incorporate updates and continuous contributions. Whenever applicable and subject to availability, recipes would be translated into key languages of the community and the relevant language for the recipe. Throughout the recipe collection process, we also aim to create recipe leaflets that can be distributed to the patrons and greater accessibility.

## References

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