

## **Vancouver Food Asset Maps and Developing our Understanding of Kitchen Access**

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### **Introduction**

An asset map is a tool that focuses on the valuable resources available for public use in a community. The aim is to maximize the use of these assets by making them known and accessible (Silas et al.). The first food asset map in Canada was introduced to Toronto in 2009, with the aim of mapping resources for individuals in low economic areas of the Greater Toronto area (Mcintyre, 2016). Using information collected by reaching out to stakeholders in the community, a food asset map includes key information such as the locations and operating hours of community kitchens, grocery stores, and discounted or free food for example.

The city of Vancouver is a multicultural hub with a high rate of immigration contending with increasing costs of living. As a result of this, as well as low wages, economic instability burdens many individuals. A food asset map would help these individuals gain an understanding of what resources are available for their use in their communities. Vancouver Coastal Health has taken on the responsibility of collecting information for the Vancouver food asset map by contacting food services and organizing the information into a user friendly virtual map. Our goal is to strengthen the knowledge of community kitchen access programs in Vancouver and assess functionality of the Vancouver Food Asset Map amongst community members.

### **Significance**

This project will facilitate the accessibility and utilization of communal kitchen use in Vancouver, in hopes to increase community food security. Miewald and Aleck (2014) found that individuals with poorly equipped kitchen facilities had three times the rate of food insecurity compared to those with better food preparation resources. Kitchen access allows individuals in the community who lack kitchen facilities an opportunity to cook, and eat healthy nutritious meals. Access to these kitchens is part of a community capacity development initiative that empowers individuals and their communities, enabling community members to feel more in control of their health and wellbeing (Moffatt, 2008).

Food security is a growing public health concern. Many chronic diseases are diet related and have a higher prevalence within food insecure populations (BC Ministry of Health, 2013). As students, we will be assisting Vancouver Coastal Health Public Health Dietitians and working alongside community partners to further build upon a mapping tool that will target individuals experiencing food insecurity. Community mapping builds awareness of the resources that exist in our local food system to meet our food needs (Silas et al., 2016). The visual food map is an asset based community development tool which encourages citizens to claim their rights of access to food assets which they depend on for their livelihoods (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

Our project is to build an inventory of kitchen access assets in Vancouver so that community members see value in these resources that otherwise might have been ignored or unrecognized. We will be contributing to the map by filling in the gaps of missing information while also seeking new assets. Our overall goal is to tackle food insecurity in Vancouver and help members in our community to have greater access to kitchen facilities and to ultimately utilize these assets to achieve food security.

## **Objectives and Inquiry Questions**

Our objective is to bridge the gap between food assets, community members, and agencies, by providing an updated, dynamic, and easy to use tool. This will better aid community members and agencies with resources for locating and utilizing kitchen access programs in Vancouver. We hope to promote capacity for community building for food insecure individuals with the goal of contributing to health and wellbeing.

The following inquiry questions will act as guidelines for this project:

- What kitchen access programs are available in Vancouver?
- How are kitchen access programs utilized by community members?
- To what extent do kitchen access programs aid in community food security?

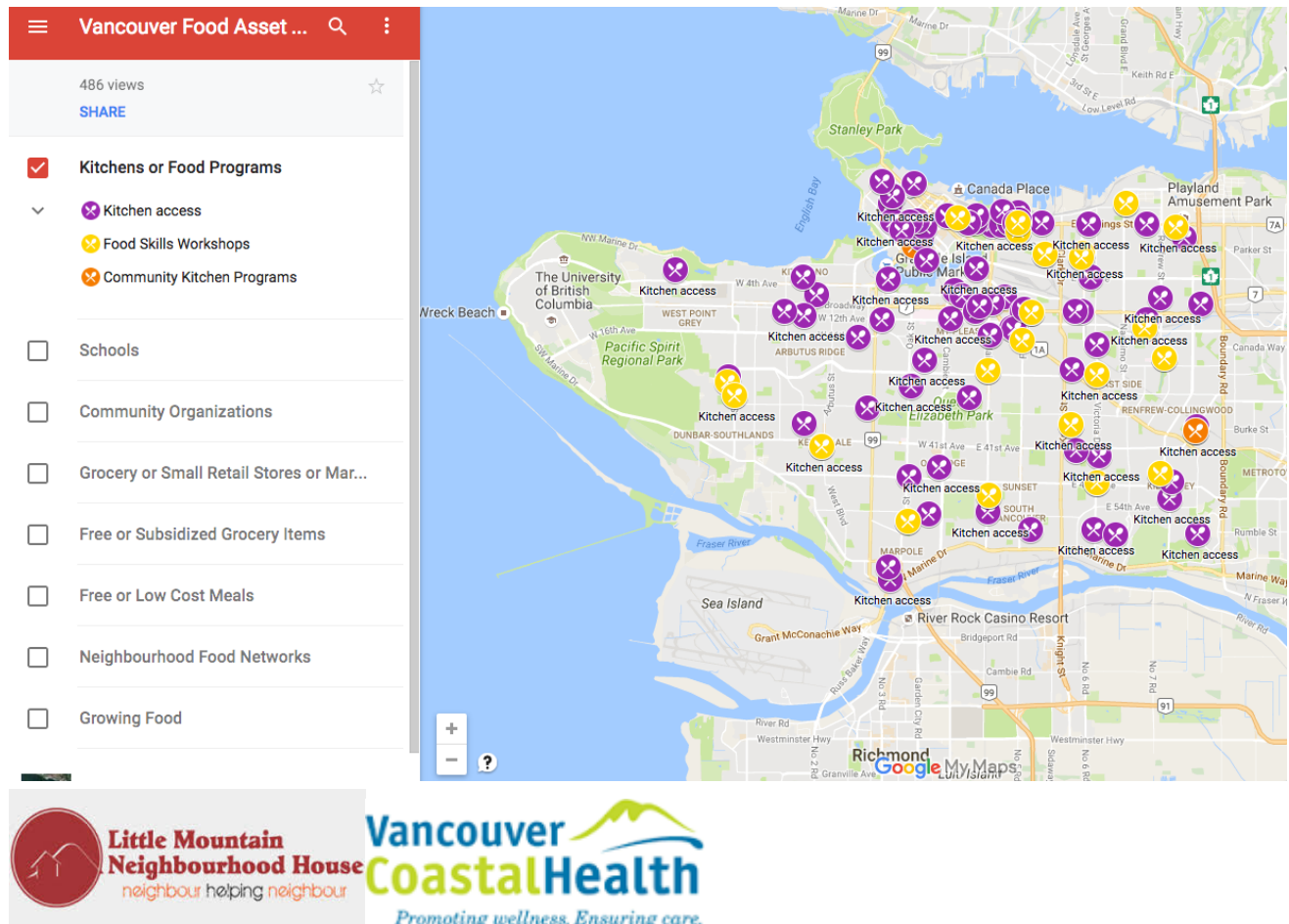
## **Methods**

Our group will be collecting two forms of data to aid in the development of the food asset map. We will begin by collecting informational data on Vancouver kitchen access programs through their websites, online sources, phone or email. We will be attempting to fill gaps in the pre-existing kitchen access program database, while also seeking out new programs. We will input data regarding contact information, location, services provided, cost, and other key details of each organization into an excel document. This will be processed and integrated into the map by Vancouver Coastal Health.

Furthermore, we will perform community based research by working directly with community members at Little Mountain community center in Vancouver, to pilot the food asset map. In collecting this data, community members will interact first hand with the map, and complete a survey that has been provided to us by Vancouver Coastal Health. This survey will allow for a better understanding of how the map can, and will be used by the public. Upon completion, our group will put forth a report documenting the project as well as providing recommendations for improvements.

All members of our group have completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) certification, and will act in compliance with these standards at all times. We will ensure that we have informed consent from all parties to include information regarding their kitchen access program in the food asset map. Additionally, we will obtain informed consent from all participating community members while trialing the map. We will use a standardized informed consent document supplied by our professor, Will Valley. We

will ensure that participants are aware they can withdraw from, or interrupt the survey at anytime. To maintain privacy, information will not be made public. Participants will be informed that their information will be accessible only to individuals involved in the project at UBC and Vancouver Coastal health. We also highly respect the privacy and personal information of our survey participants.



## References

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