

## **A Proposal: Riley Park Community Produce Library**

### **Introduction**

Our community project is based at the Riley Park Community Garden in Vancouver. The garden is a project of the Little Mountain Riley Park Neighbourhood Food Network (LM-RP FN), which is part of the Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network, an organization that aims to address the issues of food security and community involvement (Riley Park Community Garden, n.d.). Volunteers work in the garden growing produce, maintaining the space, and encouraging community participation through events and educational seminars. The LM-RP FN has identified issues surrounding food security and food literacy in the Riley Park community, especially in vulnerable populations, such as low-income families, senior citizens, and refugees, which we will help them address. To do this, we will take part in the building and animating of a produce library, a structure which can be used to share both extra produce and food literacy information with the community.

### **Significance**

The strength of community gardens lies in their ability to educate participants and foster a sense of social responsibility (Roncarolo et al., 2015). “As residents become more aware of food insecurity and the benefits associated with community gardens, they work to change the local food system” (Kellner, 2016). To do this, our approach at the Riley Park Community Garden will be to follow the framework of Asset-based Community Development (ABCD), which is “presented as an alternative to needs-based approaches to development” (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). We will be harnessing excess produce from the garden, a limited resource which can benefit all members of the community equally (Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, 2017), and using it as a means to draw new members to the community. This will hopefully allow community partners to reach out to vulnerable populations in the area, and potentially increase food literacy, access to food, and community involvement.

### **Objectives**

Objective 1: Build a produce library in the garden, a small structure that can house extra vegetables that can be shared with the rest of the community, by the end of October.

Objective 2: Animate the produce library in order to improve its visibility, by creating food-related material and incorporating it either into or around the structure.

Objective 3: Support the weekly food-related educational events at the park, such as workshops and garden parties.

## **Methods**

Since September, we have been attending events at Riley Park on Saturdays to engage members of the community, observe the way they operate the garden, and get a sense of what the garden means to them and what their hopes are for the future.

Discussions about the design and assembly of the produce library were done in September during our first meeting with Joanne, our Community Coordinator. We have built and painted the shelf and roof and assembled the frame of the structure; we aim to have it secured in the ground by the end of October. In order to decide how to best present the structure, we will be meeting with some members of the community that are interested in graphic design. Part of our discussions with the community members each Saturday includes asking them what their expectations of the produce library are, both structurally and functionally. Besides relying on community members to donate food to the produce library, we would also like to ask the members from the Nat Bailey Farmer's Market, which runs in Riley Park on Saturdays, to donate extras to the library.

We also need to understand more about what types of food people from the Riley Park community are familiar with, so we will be able to maximize the effect of the produce library and animate the garden. To do this, data collection will be held in early November. Due to cost and time limitations, convenience sampling will be used (collection data from people who are passing by the park). Also, in order to increase the reliability of the results, we will be holding interviews and giving out questionnaires. The results will give us an idea of the type of food we are mainly receiving, which we can then start researching for the nutritional advantages and a couple appropriate cooking methods of the food we are about to receive and also bring to the community organizer for approval.

Around two weeks after the produce library starts running, we will be interviewing the community members again to gauge their reactions to the produce library. After these interviews, we hope to start tailoring more events to suit what community members have told us they would like to see. To prevent ethical violations, people who do not want to be interviewed will not be forced to participate in our survey and participant information will be kept confidential. We also respect the cultural norms of Riley Park community members by avoiding sensitive topics; if the topics must be approached, it will be done so appropriately.

## **Outcomes**

Our final product will be a produce library for the Riley Park community in the Riley Park community garden; it will be an animated structure with two shelves and a roof. The produce library will be structurally sound by the end of October and by mid to late November we will use the fully operational and animated produce library on Saturdays during the the Riley Park garden events. In addition, at the end of November, we will be incorporating suggestions from the members of the community obtained from the analysis of the collective interviews. Suggestions will not limited to the produce library; we will be taking feedback on the garden

activities itself. Feedback provided open the door for future projects such as creating more cooking demonstrations tailored to community members or growing more culturally appropriate produce in the garden.

### **Budget**

The materials for the produce library are being provided by sponsors of Riley Park Community Garden. All costs within reason are being covered.

### **References**

Kellner, G. (2016). Growing food security: The impact of community gardens on food security in Denver, Colorado. University of Denver, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Little Mountain Neighbourhood House. (n.d.). Retrieved October 09, 2017, from <http://web.lmnhs.bc.ca/vision-mission-and-values/>

Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (2003). From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development. *Development in practice*, 13(5), 474-486.

Riley Park Community Garden. (n.d.). *Garden & Shed*. Retrieved from <https://www.rileyparkgarden.org/story/>

Roncarolo, F., Adam, C., Bisset, S., Potvin, L. (2015). Traditional and Alternative Community Food Security Interventions in Montréal, Québec: Different Practices, Different People. *Journal of Community Health*; New York 40.2 (Apr 2015): 199-207.