

SESSION 8

All around the table: Food and community

BACKGROUNDER FOR EDUCATORS

We think of maps as illustrating the relationship between people and land, however, maps are also used to mark relationships, cultural landmarks, and the history of a region. Food mapping is the process of plotting points on a map that relate to how a community grows, eats, accesses, and enjoys food. A food map can have a specific purpose, such as helping understand where and how people are accessing food or, more broadly, can include a variety of points that reflect how a community interacts with food.^{xv} Food mapping helps to visualize food systems and identify gaps. For example, food mapping may determine that there are no grocery stores within walking distance in a neighbourhood.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Kids will explore their local food system and identify food assets in their communities.



SPECIAL MATERIALS NEEDED

- Map of your region
- **Food mapping symbols**, or materials to make your own
- **Food access symbols**



SAMPLE TIMING AND FLOW

- 20 min Food Mapping
- 20 min Food Access
- 40 min Meal Preparation
- 20 min Garden Activity
- 15 min Meal Sharing
- 5 min Clean-up

ACTIVITIES

FOOD MAPPING

Ask: Does anyone have an idea of what we mean when we say food environment?

Our food environment consists of the foods that are available in our neighbourhoods, towns and schools. Food environments also includes the social environment, such as the messages we receive about food (e.g., food advertisements) and what we see others eating.

As a group, you're going to "Map your food community" by putting pictures of all the places where participants can get food on the map. Use a map of your town, city or school neighbourhood, or draw a rough map on a piece of chart paper with main streets and landmarks. Use our **food mapping symbols**, or post-its (or blank paper with tape) and create your own!

Examples of "food community locations" include: grocery store, corner store, breakfast programs, home, vending machines, restaurants, school, food bank, gardens, friends, markets, wild foraged foods, community kitchens.

Take a closer look at the food map you've created. Have the kids mark where they live on the map. Are many of the food community locations around their homes? Can they walk there? What kind of food can they buy within walking distance?



SUGGESTED GARDEN ACTIVITY

One of the keys to having a strong community is being able to work together and the willingness to help others. Continue this theme by trying a group-building activity. Or, in the autumn, pass on a gift to next year's gardeners and plant garlic.

GETTING HEALTHY FOOD

For advanced or older groups, you can take mapping one step further. Explain that despite food being available in lots of places; quite often our food environments don't always make eating healthy easy or the default choice. Certain factors can make it easier for us to make healthy food choices, while others can make it very difficult, such as: money, transportation, time, social support, knowledge and skills, access to a garden, and available kitchen space can all affect whether you are able to eat healthy food.

Using the **food access symbols** and the food graphics below as examples, ask kids to group factors in the "Help" category (things that make it easier for them and their families to eat healthy or supports) and the "Harder" category (things that make it more difficult or barriers). Some factors may appear in both categories - that's okay!

Ask: Why did you decide to put certain factors in the Help category and others in the Harder?

The pictures below show examples of factors that might help or make it harder to access food.



RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

Make a soup based on the **Stone Soup story**. This story talks about the importance of sharing food, so everyone has something to eat.

Try making a connection between factors that help and make it harder for us to get food in our communities to the important role people and community play so no one goes hungry. Having a strong community means being able to help each other, learn from one another and work together.



TIP

To shorten the activity, try using "dotmocracy". Create two identical sheets, one for "Helps" (or supports) and one for "Harder" (or barriers). Give each participant three stickers and have them "vote" on which factors on each sheet are most significant.



FOOD FUN FOR ALL!

Roles around food have a long history of gender biases and we want to be careful to avoid them. Check your assumptions and be mindful of how you talk about cooking at home. For example, avoid only referring to just mom cooking, but include dad, too! Try to have clean-up duties, like washing and drying dishes and removing compost, recycling and garbage, shared equally by everyone.



EXTRA RESOURCES

- To learn about Food Mapping, check out Food Matters Manitoba **Food Mapping Toolkit** and Food Secure Canada's **Food Mapping Resource** (which has a section on Food Mapping with kids).
- A natural extension of a food mapping is diving deeper into the topic of food justice and empowering young people to be agents of social change. Create an account on the **Pod Knowledge Exchange** and gain full access to the Stop's Sustainable Food Systems Guide that explores these themes.