

## Mapping Climate Solutions in Your Community

As someone who cares about climate action, you've probably already noticed the problems caused by the climate crisis right in your own neighbourhood. Maybe you've seen how your street floods every time there's a storm, or you know that your school is still heated with fossil fuels, or you've noticed that during heat waves, there's no safe place for kids to play at your local park.

A great way to get thinking about the issues in your own community is to create a big map of your neighbourhood, school, or park. You can draw problems and solutions right onto the map while discussing your visions for a healthy, safe, climate-resilient community.

Identifying climate-related problems on a map and discussing possible solutions can be a fantastic first activity for a new club. Not only does this activity use examples that are familiar to all the kids in your club, but you also can take your observations and go out into your community to make real-life change! Using your maps as a jumping-off point, you can make a big difference in your own community.



### Supplies:

- a large-scale map of your community (make this big enough to cover a table, so that multiple people can gather around to work on it)
- art supplies, such as markers, pens, and pencils
- optional: a roll of large tracing paper, available at stationery stores (this lets you add your suggestions to the map without drawing directly on the map)
- optional: a laptop and projector system for a slideshow of historical maps and inspiring climate solutions

### Do Ahead:

1. Create a large-scale map of your neighbourhood, local park, and/or school. You can get this printed at a print shop or, if you're feeling artistic, draw it yourself. Make it as detailed as possible, identifying things like roads, sidewalks, trees, and water sources.

2. If possible, find historical maps of your community, so that you can talk about how your neighbourhood has changed over the decades.
3. Find some examples of community groups (see **Resources** for a few options) that have developed inspirational climate solutions in their own neighbourhoods. It's helpful to look at some real problems in other communities and talk about solutions that are making a positive impact.

## How To:

1. If possible, before you start drawing on your own map, look at some historical maps of your community and talk about the differences between the old maps and your neighbourhood as it exists today. Here are some questions you might ask:
  - What kinds of buildings are in your community now, compared with the last century? Can you see your own house or apartment building on the maps?
  - Is there more or less tree cover now than there was fifty years ago?
  - Where are the roads on the map, and how have they changed over the years?
  - What has happened to local streams over the decades?
2. For inspiration, discuss some examples of communities that have implemented creative climate solutions. For example, you could look at schools that have installed solar panels, neighbourhoods that have built rain gardens, or parks with great examples of community gardens.
3. Spread your giant map on a table (covering it with tracing paper if you want to reuse the map) and gather around it.
4. While you look at the map, talk about the kinds of problems you see around your neighbourhood. For example:
  - Is there enough shade at your park or school playground to keep kids safe?
  - Where is the spot in the playing field that always turns into a lake during big rainstorms?
  - What kinds of energy are public buildings in your neighbourhood using?
  - Does your neighbourhood have bike lanes or other traffic controls to make cycling and walking safe?
5. Using markers and other art supplies, draw your climate solutions on the map or tracing paper. If you have a big group, break into smaller groups to do this exercise, and have one group work on the map while the others do another activity. For example, would you:
  - add compost bins at your community centre?
  - install heat pumps in your school?
  - plant shade trees around the playground?
  - create a rain garden on the street that always floods in storms?
  - add more bike lanes and crosswalks?

6. While you work, discuss your ideas and brainstorm solutions together.
7. If you split into groups to draw on the map, come back together as a whole group to present your new maps and talk about your observations and solutions.

### **After the Activity:**

After you present your maps to each other, talk about your experience creating maps of your community. Some questions you might ask:

- Did making a map of your community change your perspective of the neighbourhood? What did you notice about it that you hadn't thought about before?
- If you split into groups to work on the map, what did you notice about the other groups' observations? Did they have very different visions of your neighbourhood, or did you mostly agree on the problems and solutions? What did you admire about the other groups' maps?
- In addition to the solutions you've drawn today on the maps, what other actions can we take to help our community become safer and more climate resilient? What does your ideal community look like?

### **Take it Further:**

- Now that you've discussed some of the major climate problems in your community and suggested solutions for them, how will you take action to see your ideas come to life? Talk about this as a group—maybe you'll come up with a plan for your next meeting!
  - Note: It's a great idea to brainstorm a list of lots of things you want to change. Some of them may seem way beyond your capacity as a kids' climate club right now, but you never know. Maybe you'll come up with an incredible solution, or maybe you'll be able to team up with another group to effect major change!
- You can use the other Our Kids' Club guides for some ideas about how to put your suggestions into action. If you're noticing a lot of traffic and pollution around your school, what about planning an **active transportation event [link]**? Could you **write letters [link]** to your city's Parks and Recreation department, asking for compost bins in your local park?

### **Resources:**

**Maps:** For detailed current and historical maps of your community, check your city's geographical informational systems (GIS) website.

### **Inspiration:**

- A parent in Vancouver started a bike bus to get kids to school safely, without fossil fuels: [https://www.forourkids.ca/bike\\_to\\_school\\_resources](https://www.forourkids.ca/bike_to_school_resources).

- A community in Vancouver is working to recreate a stream by means of a rainway, which helps manage rainwater, calms traffic, and provides space for native plantings: <https://www.rainway.ca/>.
- A student in Ontario created a plastic-free school lunch campaign: <https://foecanada.org/water-and-plastics/plastic-free-lunch-campaign>.
- An elementary school and secondary school in Squamish, BC, collaborate on a school farm: <https://www.squamishcan.net/about-2>. (Farm to School BC also has resources for designing and implementing a school garden: <https://farmtoschoolbc.ca/school-gardens/>.)
- An elementary school in Coquitlam, BC, installed solar panels on its roof, and its students can track how much energy the panels produce: <https://tricitydispatch.com/coquitlam-school-earns-a-clean-energy-champion-designation/>.