

## Mapping the Past

### Big Ideas: Sense of Place and Change Over Time

*Both place-based learning and EfS begin with the goal of understanding one's own place so that we can better understand the world. When individuals have cultivated a sense of place in our home communities, we can begin to comprehend the complex interactions of local, regional and global environmental, economic, and social factors over time. When people from varying generations do this activity together and share their stories and maps, we begin to understand how a place can change over time and the connections between generations.*

#### You will need:

1 piece of paper and 1 crayon per participant

#### Essential Questions:

- What and who makes up our place?
- How do people interact with the natural and built environments?
- How has living in this community changed over time

#### Activity:

As the facilitator gives verbal prompts, each participant begins to draw a map of their childhood place. To build an understanding of intergenerational connections, this activity can be done in pairs of people from different generations—a grandparent and a child, a neighborhood elder and a young student, a teen and their parent, etc.

*“Think back to when you were a young child, younger than 12. Picture your home, your neighborhood, your community, the special places that you played in and spent time in. We are each going to draw a simple map of that childhood landscape. ”*

**\*\*\*Don't worry if you don't recall all of these details. The point is to think about these features and to build awareness. The map doesn't have to be to scale or accurate.**

#### Prompts:

- Draw a star in the center of your page. That marks your home.
- Imagine that the area where you could freely roam or regularly played in fills the center of your map. Draw in the borders of that play area, leaving some space on the paper beyond your childhood play area. (The borders may be a street, a building, or a fence—a human made border, or a natural border like a river or the woods.)
- Think about the special places you would play in as a child. Places for:
  - hiding
  - exploring and physical adventure
  - collecting
  - fantasy play

- miniature worlds
- fort building
- meeting friends

Quickly, mark a few of these special places on your map with a symbol or a drawing.

- Mark where your school was with a square. Was it within your play area or beyond that border?
- Where was the nearest “wild” space? Mark that place with a leaf.
- Put a B down on the paper to represent a nearby business that you or your family frequented. (A store, bank, cultural organization) Did you have to travel far?
- Where did your family get your food? From a store, a garden, a market... Mark that place with an F.
- Imagine where that food was grown. Draw an arrow pointing in the direction where the nearest farm would have been.
- Think about the topography of your neighborhood. Mark the highest point in the area with a triangle.
- Think about the water in your landscape. Where was the nearest natural body of water? Draw that in with a symbol (squiggly lines for a river, a round shape for a pond...)
- Where did your drinking water come from? Draw a water droplet in the corner that represents the direction of that water source.
- Where did your weather come from? Draw a cloud on the map representing the direction that weather systems typically moved into your bioregion.
- Think about the place that was most important to you as a child. Mark that place with a heart.

### Debrief:

- Why are some places more significant than others?
- Which places do we attach strongly to and why?
- How does knowledge of our home region help us to understand other physical and social contexts?
- What is important for young people to know about their community and landscape?
- How do we help them to gain this understanding—a sense of place?
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Inspired by the work of Peter Berg, David Sobel and Shelburne Farm’s Sustainable Schools Project.

### Resources:

Berg, P. (2006). Finding your own bioregion. In *Ecological literacy*, Bioneers (pp. 126-134 ). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and nature*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.