

IMPACT

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Idaho's Journey builds leadership in human rights

The Situation

In 2005, the University of Idaho Extension launched Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights as a hands-on leadership development traveling workshop, exploring the roots of Idaho's peoples and their human rights issues. Community members and leaders are trained in concepts of human rights, regional roots of diversity and inclusiveness, and successful strategies for addressing those issues.

Journeys are developed with local partners to meet four goals: familiarize participants with local cultural, ethnic, and religious history; investigate sites and meet people responsible for key actions for human rights; increase ability to address diversity and inclusiveness in home communities; and strengthen the network among those concerned about human rights/inclusiveness. Since the start of the program, Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights has been conducted in several regions of the state.

Our Response

In October 2011 Idaho's Journey came to north central Idaho, exploring diversity challenges – past and present – in Nez Perce and Latah counties. Twenty-seven participants attended the two day workshop in Lewiston and Moscow. Eleven speakers presented on the following topics:

- Human Rights: Where Did They Come From?,
- Women's Suffrage and the Leadership Journey for Idaho Women,
- World War II Kooskia Internment Camp,
- Afternoon Spirits: A Trolley Ride Through Lewiston's History,



Participants tour downtown Moscow in wheelchairs to experience levels of access to public spaces. Photo by Debra Rumford.

- Sacajawea and the Lewis/Clark Journey of Discovery,
- The Long (and continuing) Journey toward Gender Equity in Higher Education,
- Inclusive Design and Access to the City: Moscow Public Space Experiential Tour,
- The American Disability Act: What did it Take to Get it Established?

Program Outcomes

At the conclusion of the Journey, participants were asked about the impact of the program on their knowledge and attitudes about issues of diversity and human rights in Idaho. Responses showed significant increases in knowledge of the people and events important to Idaho's past and present challenges of diversity and human rights, and how past challenges can help us understand present day is-

sues. In addition, they reported improved knowledge of strategies that have been successful in addressing those issues and a stronger commitment to helping address them in Idaho. They also reported increases in the ability to talk about or take action on issues. Finally, they felt more strongly connected to others in Idaho concerned about diversity and human rights.

Participants' comments show how they plan to put their new knowledge to work at home, work and in their communities:

- I hope to be able to be more aware of and have greater contact and content regarding disability in my work as an educator.
- Support the cultural change necessary to acknowledge the human rights (and humanity) for all people.
- How to get help—connect with others, make our school more accessible.
- I'll use the knowledge gained and I think continue to learn, be aware, and be involved.
- Expanding the respect I extend to others.
- As a teacher I'll use some of the Journey speaker's ideas and information in my Sociology and U.S. History classes.
- I will use all that I have learned in practice in my home community. It is especially helpful in my role as a resident assistant at University of Idaho.

Long term follow-up of Idaho's Journey alumni show that participants follow up on their Journey experience by seeking further information through reading and attending lectures, and that they take action for human rights through organizational activities and every day personal interaction. Many participants went on to assume leadership roles in organizations or activities relevant to diversity and human rights.

Projections by the U.S. Census in 2008 show continued growth in diversity throughout the United States. Communities will need well-informed members who can draw all constituent peoples into community life. Our results show that Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights has been instrumental in developing a well-trained core of individuals working to build inclusive communities at the local level. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Programs such as Idaho's Journey can develop strong voices for human rights within a community, preparing leaders who are better able to speak up and meet the challenges ahead.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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