

# IMPACT

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## Idaho's Journey learning experience reaches far and wide

### The Situation

Communities throughout Idaho have experienced population changes in recent years, shifting community patterns in education, race, ethnicity, income, work roles, religion, age, beliefs and traditions. University of Idaho Extension personnel work with many communities that have undergone dramatic changes, such as growing immigrant and refugee groups, an influx of new retirees, a shift from rural to urban living, and transitions in religious composition. These communities often struggle to develop a welcoming environment for all of its residents — new and old alike. The University of Idaho Extension wanted to help communities address these issues through a historically based educational program on diversity and human rights.

### Our Response

Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights was developed by UI Extension as a traveling workshop, with participants visiting sites relevant to key events for human rights, both past and present. At each site, experts and community hosts provide insights on the events and people that shaped the Idaho of today.

Idaho's Journey moves to a new location each year to accommodate the stories of human rights and diversity in all corners of the state. We have completed seven different Journeys since 2005, covering topics such as the history of Hispanic populations in Idaho, the role of Chinese in Idaho's mining camps, the Minidoka Internment camp for Japanese-Americans during WWII, current challenges of education and income for immigrant populations, African-Americans in Idaho Territory, the boarding school experience for tribal youth, Idaho's early leaders in worker rights and women's suffrage, and environmental sustainability as a human right.



### Program Outcomes

After the Idaho's Journey experience, participants report that they have gained knowledge about Idaho's challenges of diversity and human rights, and strategies to address such issues. They also learned how Idaho's history can help address present day challenges for Idaho, and felt stronger in their ability and commitment to speak up and take action on issues of diversity and human rights. Finally, participants feel better connected to others in the state concerned about diversity and human rights.

In the summer of 2009, we contacted alumni from past Journeys to ask about the program's impact over the months and years since they participated. Respondents had traveled on the Journey anywhere from nine months to four years before the survey.

Participants rated the impact of the Journeys to be strongest for the knowledge they gained, including their understanding of the people and events relevant to diversity and human rights in Idaho (mean = 3.46

on a 4 point scale), how Idaho's past challenges help us understand current issues of diversity and human rights (mean = 3.69), and strategies that could be successful in addressing issues of diversity and human rights (mean = 3.40). In their own words:

- I have been especially impressed with the diversity of Idaho in the 1800s. The past experiences and present concerns of Idaho's tribes have been eye-opening.
- I am much better informed about the historical roots of the clientele I work with on a regular basis.
- It has helped me to teach students that Idaho not only has more diversity than we are aware of, but that all people have commonality in their needs and rights.

Program effects were also shown in respondents' behavior, including speaking up or taking action on issues of diversity and human rights (mean = 3.15 on a 4 point scale), making connections with others in Idaho concerned about diversity and human rights (mean = 2.96), and increased time and attention to diversity and human rights (mean = 2.96). As they said it:

- I joined a human rights group, and speak out when I see injustice or lack of knowledge that lets someone say something incorrect about someone of a different race or culture.
- I have shared stories from the Journey with several friends. I have taken family members to visit sites of the Journey. Also, I am much better informed about Idaho's history as I travel the state.
- I spread the word on all the wonderful differences we all enjoy. It is not a division; it is a gift to learn from each other.

Since their Idaho's Journey experience, participants followed up by reading further about human rights (50%), speaking up or taking action on human rights and diversity (61%), and joining or continuing memberships in human rights organizations (19%). Some participants took on new leadership roles in human rights and diversity since their Journey (19%), while others continued previous leadership roles (11%).

Idaho's Journey is designed as an intense learning experience over 2-3 days, with relatively small enrollments for each Journey (14-22 people). However, these results show the power of this approach, with strong effects even years after the training. Many people told others about what they learned or took action to benefit others, demonstrating how a few people with a significant learning experience can have a broad impact at home, at work and in the community.

We asked our respondents to estimate the extent to which their Idaho's Journey experience has affected others with

they have come in contact. Combining their estimates, the set of 26 respondents report speaking out or taking action on human rights 135 times, attending 61 human rights events, and reading 81 books and articles on diversity and human rights since their Journey. Participants also reconnected with the people and sites they encountered on the journey a total of 72 times. Considering all of these effects, these 26 people estimate that their Idaho's Journey experience has affected more than 1,100 people. Now that's impact!

Idaho's Journey is the work of UI Extension faculty Susan Traver, Arlinda Nauman, Audrey Liddil, Brian Luckey, Kathee Tifft, Laura Laumatia, Carol Hampton, and Harriet Shaklee.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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