



University of Idaho  
Extension

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## Idaho's Journey prepares UI Extension for more inclusive programming

### The Situation

Population growth in recent decades has changed the composition of Idaho communities. State level changes are often magnified at the local level, so that some Idaho communities are now majority Hispanic, others have a recent influx of retirees, or have experienced big shifts in family income or education.

Research shows that population changes can undermine community cohesion, increasing suspicion and hostility between groups. Extension can help communities meet these challenges, developing programs inclusive of its full constituent resident base.

### Our Response

In 2005, University of Idaho Extension developed a traveling workshop called Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights to educate Idahoans about diversity and inclusiveness in Idaho. Over the past eight years, UI Extension has hosted regional two-day Journey programs in which participants visit sites and talk to key players relevant to past and present issues of diversity and human rights.

Idaho's Journey moved to a new location each year to accommodate the stories of human rights and diversity in all corners of the state. Programs covered regional human rights issues of the past and present, including intergroup relations, prejudice/discrimination, economic equity, environmental justice, power relationships, and cultural heritage, as well as action strategies for change. Over the years, the program has worked in collaboration with 10 government agencies and councils, 4 Native American tribes, 40 nonprofit organizations and local resources, 8 northwest universities and colleges, 33 historical sites and landmarks, 15 University of Idaho departments and offices, and 11 Idaho businesses.

### Program Outcomes

Idaho's Journey for Diversity and Human Rights proved to be a powerful experience for participants. Even years after their Journey, program alumni said that the Journey's impact remained strong, helping them understand the people, events, and history relevant to diversity and human rights in Idaho. Follow-up actions since their Journey included reading, speaking up, and taking action on human rights and diversity, and joining or continuing memberships in human rights organizations. Several participants have moved into leadership roles in diversity and human rights.

Idaho's Journey also was an important professional development tool for the Extension county educators who served as program hosts, working in partnership with area groups as they arranged for speakers and sites, and planned and promoted the program. In November, 2012 UI Extension conducted a survey on the impact of the program on the several county Extension offices, and the county educators who hosted programs.

**Impact on Extension County Educators:** Survey responses showed strong agreement among Extension county hosts that the Journey helped them understand the historical context of current diversity and human rights issues in their counties (8/9 respondents agreed) as well as the regional, state, national, or global context of those issues (8/9 agreed). In addition, educators found that the Journey helped them better understand the clients they work with, including their historical roots (9/9), their beliefs and practices (8/9), and the challenges they face (8/9).

County educators' comments offer insight into the impact of Idaho's Journey for them, including fostering an enriched understanding and awareness of lo-

cal issues, providing a “framework” or “additional lens,” in the words of the educators. The Journey enabled one respondent to move from “knowledge and awareness” to “engagement with cultures other than my own.” One educator characterized Idaho’s Journey as “an awesome partnership between Extension, University of Idaho academics, and communities,” while another concluded that “the Journey model would be powerful as a key component of Extension educators’ orientation to a community they are charged with serving.”

**Impact on Extension County Offices:** The county educators unanimously concluded that hosting Idaho’s Journey for Diversity and Human Rights in their communities raised the profile of UI Extension as a leader in the area of diversity, and helped them meet community leaders and individuals concerned about diversity and human rights (9/9 respondents agreed). County educators also all agreed (9/9) that their work with Idaho’s Journey strengthened their connections with under-represented community groups, and helped them develop culturally-appropriate programs. Finally, all county hosts (9/9) reported that the program helped them work more effectively with colleagues with backgrounds different from their own.

Educator comments offer specifics about the Journey’s impact on Extension work. Some educators noted that Journey programs established and/or strengthened foundational relationships with cultural groups, leading to further collaborative work to meet community needs, and (in one county) helping to attract grant funds for further programming. In other cases, the program structure and evaluation strategies of Idaho’s Journey served as a model for delivery and assessment of other county Extension programs, strengthening educators’ abilities to tell the story of Extension impact on Idaho communities.

Population trends show continued growth in diversity throughout the United States. Communities will need well-informed members to strengthen bridges between groups. Idaho’s Journey for Diversity and Human Rights demonstrates how an ongoing program on diversity and human rights can be a powerful tool for Extension in engaging effectively with its ever changing constituent base.

The Idaho’s Journey program team is grateful to all present and former UI Extension personnel who worked on Idaho’s Journey for Diversity and Human Rights, including Sue Traver (Bonner County), Arlinda Nauman (4-H), Kathee Tifft (Nez Perce County), Audrey Liddil (Bannock County), Brian Luckey (Ada County), Carol Hampton (Boundary County), Grace Wittman (Cassia County), Laura Laumatia (Coeur d’Alene Tribe), Lyle Hansen (Jerome County), Mireille Chahine (Dairy Specialist), Rhea Lanting (Twin Falls Coun-

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