Building Bridges
Empathetic Listening, Appreciative Inquiry, and Community Inclusion as Authentic Community Engagement Work

Adrienne, Eric, Melissa, Robby, Tim, Veronika
Agenda

Welcome-Introductions

Experiential introduction of session topics
  - Empathetic Listening
  - Appreciative Inquiry

Community Inclusion Examples
  - Thinkery
  - Denver Museum of Nature & Science
  - Museum of Life and Science
  - Science Museum of Minnesota
  - Oregon Museum of Science and Industry

Table Conversations
Empathetic Listening

Active listening or reflective - a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding and trust. It enables the listener to receive, accurately interpret the speaker's message, and appropriate respond.

- builds trust and respect
- enables the disputants to release their emotions - reduces tensions,
- encourages the surfacing of information, and
- creates a safe environment that is conducive to collaborative problem solving

Paying attention to another person with empathy [emotional identification, compassion, feeling, insight].

- seek to understand, before being understood
- connect emotionally with another person while simultaneously attempting to connect cognitively.

Practice: Empathetic Listening

1. Turn to your neighbors: create a group of 3
2. Choose roles: Speaker, Listener, Responder
3. Speaker - talk for 1 minute
4. Listener - I heard you say...
5. Responder - I wonder...
6. Switch

Talk about an opportunity you see for engaging (new) community members in your work
Appreciative Inquiry

“At its heart, AI is about the **search for the best in people**, their organizations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them. AI is not so much a shift in the methods and models of organizational change, but AI is a fundamental **shift in the overall perspective** taken throughout the entire change process to ‘**see**’ the wholeness of the human system and to ‘**inquire**’ into that system’s strengths, possibilities, and successes. ”

Practice: Appreciative Inquiry

1. Mix it up: Pair up with someone you don’t know
2. Conduct the interview
3. Take brief notes
4. Practice empathetic listening, allow for silence
5. You will each have 4 minutes for each interview

From: Libraries Transforming Communities: Community Conversation Workbook
Community Inclusion is...

De-centralizing our expertise

Relationship focused

Invitation and engagement

Generative

Co-creation

A couple sources for thinking about museum inclusion:

https://incluseum.com/
https://empatheticmuseum.tumblr.com/
Community Night Spotlights

Adrienne Barnett
Associate Director of Programs
Austin, TX
Sensory Friendly Hours Challenges

**Key Values**
- Inclusive
- Innovation
- Playfulness
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Respect
- Excellence

**Community Meeting: Organizations Serving Those With Special Needs**
- Financial constraints
- Build empathy
- Social Inclusion
- Transportation

Logos:
- Autism Society
- Joshua's Stage
- Easterseals
- The University of Texas at Austin
- Texas Center for Disability Studies
- Spark Learning
- Variety of Texas
Community Night Spotlights

“Thinkery strives to be an inclusive, friendly, inspiring space to learn for the entire community, regardless of financial status, mental/physical abilities, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender expression/identity or family status.”

- Wednesdays, 4-8pm
- Admission by donation, with a suggested $1 dollar donation
- Potential monthly topics

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Community Night Spotlights

Key Features

- Community Partners (2-10)
  - Partners in planning
  - Hands-on activities
  - Resource tables
  - Assist with marketing

- Thinkery-led activities (2-3)
  - Hands-on activities
  - Storytime (1 bilingual)

Ana Camelo Jackson  author of  
Stripes for Eliana

Camp in Motion

University of Texas Student
Academy of Audiology
Community Night Spotlights

Challenges
- Marketing
- Time! - for partner engagement
- Participation barriers
- Opposing views
  - Internal & external

“We went to your facilities for entertainment and learning, not for social engineering. Please rethink your decisions.”

“Rather than putting a spotlight on one part of our society, the Thinkery needs to be inclusive of all children and all families without favor or exception or ‘spotlights’.”

Austin International Drag Foundation Storytime

Sewing Pride Flags

Mini-Pride Parade
Community Night Spotlights

Goals & Benefits
- Thinkery as welcoming
- Reach new audiences
- Build empathy
- Thinkery as a community hub
- Staff development
- Build internal resources
- Contributed income!

“I didn’t know [Thinkery] was a place for my family [one with a child with a disability]. We can’t wait to come back!”

Improv with Joshua's Stage

Bilingual storytime with Austin Public Library
Community Collaboration Project
LGBTQ Community Organizations
DMNS’ Journey
2014 - 2016

DMNS Community Voices Initiative

LGBT-rexes and Ally-sauruses
Staff Affinity Group

LGBT Center of Colorado
DMNS’ Journey - 2014 - 2016

- Staff Training
- Family Programming
- Teen Programming
- Adult Programming
DMNS’ Journey - 2017

- Tapped into experiences and knowledge of staff
- Conducted initial Empathetic Interview
- Explained ultimate goals of partnership
- Invited to Community Conversation
Ignite Learning

Melissa Russell
Program Manager of Integrated Education
Durham, NC
Our mission is to create a place of lifelong learning where people, from young child to senior citizen, embrace science as a way of knowing about themselves, their community, and their world.

- The Museum partners with 22 social work agencies to deliver the Ignite Learning subsidized membership program.

- This $5 membership, admitting a family of up to 6 people per visit, serves nearly 685 families in our community and continues to grow each year.

“Our Ignite Learning partners help us turn our good intentions into good works.”
“The Museum of Life and Science feels like a safe place to open up and always one to listen and work towards building the relationship. I truly appreciate it on behalf of the community of Durham.”

“We serve about 5,000 families. It’s life-changing for families that normally cannot afford to come to a museum like this. I know they appreciate it.”
A museum staff member was walking around campus with a group of Burmese refugees. A grandmother, with an 8th grade education, saw a dinosaur model on exhibit. Through a translator she asked, “what is this, is it alive?” The staff member responded, “no, they are now extinct, but at one time they were everywhere!” She replied, “even in my country?”
Ignite Learning

Goals & Benefits

- Pathways to benefit more people in our community
- Builds understanding of underserved audiences
- Strengthens diversity and inclusion
- Closes the opportunity gap
- Deepens engagement with Ignite Learning members
- Creation of “Diversity Task Force”

Challenges

- Transportation
- People may not feel a sense of “belonging”
- Language
- Application logistics
INITIATIVE: Create pathways for the Museum to benefit more people in our community.

BROADEN OUR REACH

Identify and build understanding of the various communities underserved by informal science learning.

Invest in partnerships and infrastructure to strengthen diversity and inclusion of Museum audiences, programs, and experiences.

Explore and expand ways to close the opportunity gap, especially in Durham County.
Robby Callahan Schreiber
Career & Community Connections
Program Manager
St. Paul, MN
Cultivate relationships with specific communities of color and American Indian communities

Co-develop activities and events

Create, document, and better understand a model that can be useful to others in informal science education
**Phase 1**

**Family Groups Recruited**
- 10 community partners
- 100+ family groups
- 2-years free SMM access
- Free parking
- Childcare embedded
- Food

**Listening Sessions**
- 11 sessions led by community partners

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**Phase 2**

**Activity Design Workshops**
- Invitation to Play. Tinker.
- Make. together
- Co-creating activities

**Open House Events**
- Dedicated space to socialize
- Bilingual staff
- Greeters in lobby

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**Phase 3**

**Saturday Events**
- Spring 2015
- Fall/Winter 2016

**Focused marketing**
- Bilingual signage & surveys
- Free visits for friends/guests
- Post-project volunteer option

**Final Celebration**
Our Listening Session Questions

Relationship to SMM

• What do you think of when you hear “the Science Museum of Minnesota?”
• Based on your understanding, what happens at the museum?
  – How often do you visit?
  – What draws you to visit?
  – What prevents you from visiting?
• What are places you choose to spend time at with your family?
• What are opportunities the Science Museum of Minnesota could take to build stronger relationships with you and members of your community?

Reflect on Making

• What have you made lately? (built, fixed, created, customized, tinkered with, etc)
• What are things you have learned by making (building, fixing, creating, customizing, tinkering) or by watching others do these things?
• Who are makers in your community (family, neighbors, friends, school, work, church)?
Project Impacts

Translations:
Signage for *Play, Tinker, Make* public Saturday events are now in Spanish and Hmong.

First Time Visitors Guide:
Creation of a guide used *before* the first visit, based on feedback from participants.

New volunteer program:
Participants regularly bring new families to visit SMM and report on their experience.

Making Connections Gatherings:
Monthly opportunities for community engagement and feedback.

Trainings for front-line staff:
Sharing project data and racially charged incidents to prompt reflection and conversation.

New processes for project development:
Engage long-term with trusted community members, rather than a one-time focus group.
Veronika Nunez
Senior Community Engagement and Learning Specialist

Tim Hecox
Federal Grants Coordinator

This work is a Journey.
OMSI’s Journey - Community Engagement and Institutional Culture

A Shift in Institutional Culture
● Community engagement has been a driver for shifting our institutional culture
● Around 2008, OMSI created a Diversity Workgroup
● In 2015, OMSI created an equity statement
● In 2017, OMSI hired a new director level position, Head of People and Culture
● We just held internal listening sessions around how to communicate our commitment to equity

Community Engagement
● OMSI took a more intentional approach working with underrepresented communities ~12-15 years ago
● Federal grants has been a driver in this work
● We have developed strong relationships specifically with local Latino and Native American Communities
● We are wow trying to become more thoughtful, systematic, and sustainable with our partnerships

We still have a long way to go.
How should we communicate our commitment to equity?
Strategies for Community Engagement

- Work with partners rooted in the community (bridge people)
- Engage at the beginning - approach partners at ideation
- Adjust budget and concept of time - invest in the relationship
- Listen and respond to feedback
- Meet the needs of the partner and their community
- Go to them - for meetings, for programs, for the relationships
- Recognize the importance and complexity of language
- Engage multiple generations and voices
- Make space for cultural identity in the workplace
- Hire staff representative of your audiences
- Create safe spaces for difficult conversations
- Facilitate sustainable relationships

Collaborate with Integrity.
Projects in Collaboration with Latino Communities

Bilingual Outreach Programming & Events

Bilingual Exhibition Development
Projects in Collaboration with Native American Communities

Traditional First Food Displays

Citizen Science Programs & Traveling Exhibitions

Space Science Exhibits & Programs
Table Conversations

Learn more about our specific projects

What stood out to you?

What questions do you have?

What values inform your community engagement practices?

What strategies (shared or otherwise) do you utilize in your work?
Get or Stay in Touch

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