

# **Chicago Site Progress Report**

## **Global Indigeneity Project Summary**

### **Change-making Aims**

Across urban, Indigenous communities, the Chicago Global Indigeneity design project is working to cultivate intergenerational learning opportunities to support Indigenous knowledge, identities and practices. Many Native people learn through the oral tradition of sharing stories. Stories contain knowledge about how the world works; ways of being; social interactions with others and cultural history. The Chicago Global Indigeneity project is helping families, communities and organizational partners find ways to tell their stories and engage in program that allow families to create their own narratives that allow for the sharing of cultural traditions.

Through the co-design process, members of our community attended co-design meetings where they were asked to define programming to implement for community families. They brainstormed programs, activities and events with the purpose of creating spaces to encourage family participation. Through the process, the FLDC leadership team has hosted a writer's workshop, community powwow, Veteran's group talking circles, lacrosse training, and community BBQ with other community organizations. Each of the events have engaged participants in the process of creating and sharing their own stories, while connecting to their culture. Other programs include writing group with the purpose of documenting family and community narratives; social dance to bring families together to socialize and learn the stories and teachings from traditional and social dances from various tribal nations; and a series of talking circles focused on Native identity, gender dynamics, and elders' teachings. The talking circles are created to provide safe space to discuss perceptions and teachings relevant to strengths and challenges.

Currently, we are pursuing solidarity as our primary theory of change. Through this lens we are asking participants if the activity accomplished 1) making communities histories, struggles and resiliences present, 2) building trust and care within and across communities, 3) cultivating practices and spaces for thriving communities.

### **Co-Design Process and Partners**

Here in Chicago our design work is set up to engage Indigenous community organizations in the city by working with the American Indian and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders communities. We invite community members from each of these groups to attend co-design meetings and brainstorm various family engagement ideas. We also have a leadership team that helps to implement and facilitate the co-design sessions. The leadership team consists of staff and volunteers from the American Indian Center and the Aloha Center. The activities and programs were suggested at various community co-design meetings. In order to make these workshops, programs and activities sustainable, the American Indian Center has incorporated it into its overall operating budget and yearly activity calendar.

## **Learning with Families and Communities**

The co-design process as a program design method within the Indigenous community in Chicago provides participants the space to express their ideas regarding the creation of family engagement programs. It creates ownership and investment for participants, a platform for sharing and creation of stories and reciprocity of practicing Indigenous ways of being. Through the process, members of the community can maintain, and rebuild trust with Native community, and subsequently allow participation in community programs. Over the past few months, community members have expressed positive comments about programs and activities and there has been an increase in participation in overall events and programs at the American Indian Center. Many community members who had not participated are now attending various programs and activities. As a diverse community, made up of over 100 different Tribal Nations, we encounter many various perspectives on research in community. As a community based design process, and with ongoing support from co-designers from the University of Washington, and the other working groups from across the states, we believe the work allows us to reflect and evaluate ways to be respectful of the various perspectives while incorporating much needed programming for families and community members. Engaging families and community members in an intertribal urban community is challenging due to various tribal teachings and narratives but we are working diligently and in good faith to open spaces for the many voices and teachings to come forth and provide guidance in reclaiming our own Indigenous practices of being.

## **Designing Forward**

### **Implementation, Reflection and Redesign**

- Writing group
- Social Dance Night
- Veterans Group
- Woman's Circle

Through these activities we are providing opportunities for the community to practice community solidarity by offering programs and activities that allow participants to tell their own stories.

### **Cross-site Collaboration**

The all-calls help us reflect on our work in new ways and identify themes. One of the challenges with the work is designing programs but not always engaging in the practice of reflecting on the process. With the collaboration, it allows time and space to rethink, reflect and reengage in missed opportunities. It is productive and helpful to gain a different perspective about various challenges and successes as team members discuss their issues and ideas. Through the collaboration, we are able to refine and process the practices of design and determine next steps where necessary. The site visit was a wonderful way for us to identify themes in our work and tie the metrics to our programming in a way that we had not thought about before. Having an

opportunity to attend more site visits would be a helpful way for us to get a better sense of the work happening with the other sites and help us identify other ways of envisioning this work.

### **Transformative Impacts**

We envision a more cohesive, trusting and engaged community by January 2019. We believe the Indigenous community within Chicago will have a safer space to share our community and family narratives reflective of our community. As we continue to offer programs to provide Indigenous families the opportunities to share their stories and teachings with each other, we will become a healthier and more vibrant community. The metrics created will provide a sustainable and engaging process to begin evaluating all programs offered through this lens. These metrics are sustainable and community based measurements are created from our lived experiences and therefore, create more impactful ways of measuring community progress and success.