ENGAGING EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING

PURPOSE
The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation, in partnership with the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, Inc. (ENIPC) used oral and graphic storytelling as a primary source of information in:

- MAPPING the pueblo of Nambe, Ohkay, Picuris, Popoagae, Santa Clara, Tesuque and Taos to identify assets, gaps, overlaps, and capacity in providing services (such as home visiting) to children (0-5) and their families.
- Identifying FAMILY SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES available to families.
- Gathering information about EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION needs.
- Building a UNIQUE EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN for each pueblo including a Vision, Mission, Purpose, Strategies, Outcomes and Impact.
- Allowing for individual and COLLECTIVE REFLECTION.

The Pueblo Outreach Project sought to understand the landscape of early childhood services in the tribal areas of northern New Mexico. The project focused on strengthening relationships and communication utilizing best practices to ensure each Pueblo was equipped with the best resources and programming to meet the community’s early childhood needs.

STORYTELLING IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES
- Is an art that BUILDS COMMUNITY.
- Is a medium for COLLECTIVE LEARNING.
- Promotes AUTHENTIC UNDERSTANDING of where they are, where they have been and where they are going.
- CREATES OPPORTUNITIES for relationship-building, partnerships, collaboration and advocacy.
- Allows the tribes to WEAR DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.
- Builds capacity by giving members a place to share voices and leads to STRONGER COMMUNITY-DRIVEN VOICE.
- Helps address and leads to HEALING OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA

LESSONS LEARNED
- Honor people’s stories.
- Listen with respect.
- Do not tell or share another person’s story without permission.
- Recognize the expertise in communities by valuing knowledge.
- Each pueblo is unique in language, governance and geography.

METHODS
Understanding that all relationships take time to develop, it was important that partnerships progress to trusting relationships. The Pueblo Outreach Project belonged to each Pueblo – it was through the guidance and support from the LANL Foundation’s Early Childhood team that each Early Childhood Plan was developed through these:

METHODS
- RESOLUTION by the ENIPC was passed and supported to begin work on the project.
- Individual PERMISSION from each tribal leader was received to work with staff and develop plans.
- An ADVISORY COMMITTEE was formed with key individuals from each Pueblo to guide the process.
- Individuals developed PLANNING TEAMS to begin mapping early childhood services.

AUTHENTIC STORIES were gathered through a series of questions:
- What is working in your community?
- What is not working in your community?
- Ideally, what would you want for your community?

DRIVING QUESTIONS gathered a bigger picture and future vision of early childhood within each Pueblo. What does an early childhood structure look like?
- How will leadership be involved?
- What community programs will be involved?
- What will this have for the families?
- What is the most important accomplishment of the project?

The final result was an actionable LOGIC MODEL that strategically presents:
- GOALS
- RESOURCES
- ACTIVITIES
- OUTPUTS
- OUTCOMES
- IMPACT

DEMOGRAPHICS were collected to show HEALTH OUTCOMES as they currently stand surrounding the tribal communities.

Lastly, a creative activity was done with each team to bring a vision to what a THRIVING CHILD looks like.

RESULTS
Stories are woven webs that connect people to the past, present and future. Stories represent a community’s power demonstrating not only history but resilience of native people through the voices of storytelling. The results and understanding that were gained through the Pueblo Outreach Project initiative came through the Pueblos and their stories. What the LANL Foundation team learned was:

- ENGAGEMENT and the ability to actively listen.
- CAPACITY was strengthened through diverse stakeholders from the Pueblos.
- Focusing on RELATIONSHIPS at heart for engagement and authentic storytelling. communities shared strengths, ideas, issues and visions.
- EDUCATION at all levels was an important part of the process.

- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION has become a priority for the Pueblos.
- Eight ACTIONABLE Early Childhood Plans were created within an 18 month span of time.
- Early childhood COLLABORATIVES will continue to meet beyond the 18 months to begin IMPLEMENTATION of their plans.

IMPACT
Did we accomplish what was planned, and what was the impact? As a result of the project, the full impacts have yet to be recognized. The short-term impacts include:

- LEVERAGING of partners to collectively look at issues.
- RELATIONSHIPS continue to develop and form.
- CAPACITY to solve problems collectively with trust and respect recognized by partners.
- UNDERSTANDING the importance of Home Visiting Programs and future impacts it can accomplish within Pueblo communities.
- REALIZATION of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the effects that it has on parents and children.

The future of any community depends on their children’s well-being. Future impacts will be a result of continued partnerships and family education.

Anna Marie Garcia, M.Ed. – Early Childhood Director
Jovanna Archuleta, MBA – Pueblo Outreach Coordinator