APACHE JUNCTION IN COLLABORATION WITH PROJECT CITIES AND ASU'S COMMUNITY-BASED THEATRE CLASS

APRIL 2018

POSITIVELY GHOSTLY

Apache Junction's Mountain View

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY
THP 514: COMMUNITY BASED THEATRE CLASS
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Graduate student theatre artists partnered with a variety of community members to gather, stage, and perform 4 location-based “ghost” tales drawn from Apache Junction’s history, legend, and landscape. This project exemplified how history, culture, and the performing arts can be used to build effective connections and shared values focused particularly on the strengths of Apache Junction.

Project Projected Cost: $200  
Project Actual Cost: $149.50

**OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Build effective connections and shared values (bridging and bonding social capital)
- Leverage cultural and ecological resources to build stronger assets in creative and human capital
- Build communication assets through documentation and high quality performance event studio engagements

**PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE**
OVERALL PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Created a site-specific theatrical experience based on stories and legends gathered from and adapted by Apache Junction locals.
- Utilized and represented the cultural vitality of Apache Junction through the exchange of stories and highlighted locals' personalized relationship with AJ stories.
- Built communication assets through photo documentation of the event, and provided a thoughtfully constructed performance event.

(Left to right) Lindsey Lofgren (high school student), Nicola (graduate student), Calista Smith (high school student) and Nathaniel Candelas (high school student) with their scripts and props, ready to perform.
OUR SCOPE OF WORK

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- ASU students had ~ 30 contact hours with community partners & participants including interviews, meetings, and collaborative devising sessions.

- Student research included: informal interviews, attending the rodeo, patronizing local businesses, hiking/exploring in the mountains and surveying residents at Dirtwater Springs Restaurant, the Apache Junction Visitor Center, antique stores, the library, the museum. In addition to this, ASU students attended ethics meetings and Youth Advisory Council meetings, collaboratively created pieces with locals/received feedback, & visited Apache Junction High School theatre class where they hosted a workshop.

- Individuals, small groups and whole groups visited numerous potential performance spaces including parks, the library, the Superstition Mountain Museum, and Dirtwater Springs Restaurant.

- Artists individually and in groups spent on average between 15–30 hours working on performances.

- The partnership resulted in a 1 hour performance with 15 performers -- 12 ASU students, 3 Apache Junction community members (Youth Advisory Council Members)

- Full Table found in Appendix
PROJECT SUCCESSES

- Successfully produced a multi-sensory theatrical performance in a public venue in Apache Junction that focused on specific stories told by locals from the community.
- Created four different theatrical pieces with specific, varying aesthetic choices for each, built from stories collected from Apache Junction.
- Collaborated with local partners/participants to select and refine the stories told and how to tell them ethically and specifically.
- Managed scheduling with a variety of partners.
- Built trust and fostered relationships between ASU students and members of the Apache Junction community.
- Created pieces that represent community's cultural heritage but also the artists’ creative mind.
- Presented sensory stimulating experiences, incorporating taste, touch, visuals and stories/music.
- Performed for an intimate audience of 15.
- Created aesthetically pleasing props and costumes with a limited budget and few materials.
- Fostered a space for audience members to continue conversations and share stories about their own knowledge of the city's past.

Kelly Fielder (graduate student) puppeteers a giant butterfly as a part of the performance.
Project Challenges

- Navigating scheduling between individual group members and community partners.
- Travel distance between the student artists and Apache Junction community members.
- Getting locals/community partners to attend the performance.
- Uncertainty in how many people would attend the final performance -- which would influence the structure of the piece.
- Communicating with locals/partners about the vision and value of the project.
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PLAN

CONCLUSION:

• Fostered relationship between ASU students and Apache Junction locals through the sharing of Apache Junction stories.
• Highlighted the extant cultural vitality in Apache Junction.
• Enlivened stories of the past told through specific lenses of today's Apache Junction locals and scholars.
• Brought attention to the social cohesion of Apache Junction.
• Built new understandings in City Staff of how performance can enliven space and function as assets.

FUTURE PLANS:

• Create flexible schedules to allow more connections with the community partner.
• Curate transparent and effective communication about marketing strategies to reach out to target audience.
• Craft further intergenerational artistic experiences around the history of the community to further develop community cohesiveness.
• Build arts into future city planning.
A Toy Theatre of Jisun Myung in the Superstition Mountains.

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APPENDIX

PROJECT ACTIVITIES DIVIDED BY GROUP

Group:
Eric Villiers, Sara El Sayed, Kelly Fielder

Type of Activities:
Ghost story performance, Library Visit, Park Visit, sewing circle, rehearsal at the park, ethics meeting, and AJ high school visit and class, attended the rodeo meeting and talking with locals about the project.

What did the program participants bring to the table:

How did program participants become connected?
One audience member stayed back from the group after our performance to tell us how much he liked our stories and performance and then he shared a story he knew about a band of Apache that were massacred on the mountain. We also offered up trail mix and beef jerky to the audience as they arrived to our location which they took from the "spruce gum ark" we built for our performance.

Average Hours spent on the program as a group:
15 hours meeting together as a group. Individually (additional to meeting in person as a group), Eric: 20 hours, Sara: 15 hours, and Kelly: 20 hours.

Sara El Sayed (graduate student) embodying a Goddess for one of the performances.
**Group:**
Graduate Students: Sarah Tan, Nicola Olsen, Thomas Pertrungaro
Youth Advisory Council Members: Nathaniel Candelas, Lindsey Lofgren, Calista Smith

**Type of Activity:**
Ghost story performance with audience interaction

**Participants:**
15 in attendance. 3 Youth Advisory Council members (performers), 3 ASU students (performers) and 1 Youth Advisory Council Advisor. 100% all across the board

**What did the program participants bring to the table:**
Group members: Human capital, creative capital, social capital
YAC: Human capital, creative capital, cultural capital, civic capital

**How did program participants become connected?**
Program participants were two fold – the performers and collaborators from the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and the audience present for the performance. AJ’s YAC consists of 5 main leaders of the board and about 4–5 other participating members. All participants on YAC are in High School with the exception of JJ, the Recreation Coordinator, who is their main adult supervisor. Our group attended two of their biweekly meetings in addition to a one-on-one meeting between JJ and Nicola that helped establish the first point of contact between the two groups. During the meetings, we introduced ourselves, brainstormed preferred ghost stories, and finally rehearsed the performance. Three of the YAC members eventually took on lead roles in the final performance. The audience the day of the performance consisted of people from a range of age groups – mostly arriving in families. They were invited to participate in the performance through giving space for them to share their experience with the ghosts of AJ – only one audience member participated in this – JJ. As a group we also spent an afternoon at Dirtwater Springs Restaurant eating lunch and meeting with and hear ghost stories from 3 waitresses and from the previous owner who also showed us photos of the old shell station. Also Nicola visited the library in Apache Junction to peruse the archive for tales of Jacob Waltz and the history of the Superstition Mountain. Trish Pelletier the Library supervisor told me stories and allowed me to check out two books by local historians to use in our development of the script.

**Average hours spent on program as group?**
17 hours including in class rehearsals, two meetings with the YAC council, one on one meeting with JJ, library visit, Dirtwater Springs visit, continued discussions in the long car rides, and online meetings via phone or GoogleDocs.

**Specifics on Interviews**
Interviewed: JJ (1 hour); YAC (2 hours in two separate hour long meetings); Dirtwater Springs Restaurant waitress, previous and current owners (2 hours), librarian (1 hour)
APPENDIX (CONT.)

Group:
Claire Redfield, Donta McGilvery, Mark Swinerton, Ira Ochs

Type of Activities:
Ghost story performance

What did the program participants bring to the table (type of capital):
Group Members: Creative Capital, Cultural Capital, and Human Capital.
City: Built Capital, Civic Capital, Political Capital, and Enviromental Capital.
Dirtwater Springs Restaurant: Human Capital, Social Capital, and Cultural Capital "The staff at Dirtwater Springs gave us the structure and foundation for our piece. They also revealed their emotions to us by telling us their stories which bridge a relationship between the staff and group members."
Apache Junction Library: Civic Capital Cultural Capital: The Library provided us with a book that gave us the history of Apache Junction, and tried to connect us with Tom Kollenborn the author of the book. It was also used to connect the history of Apache Junction with the present-day establishment of Dirtwater Springs Restaurant.
Project Cites: Financial Capital
Audience: Human Capital and Social Capital Participants presence during the performance was valuable. The presence of bodies provided reason to perform. The participants also brought to the table: energy, space, knowledge, stories, and laughter.

How did program participants become connected?
We got positive feedback about the story. I heard participants gasp during the part when we performed the first zoo in Arizona was in Apache Junction. During the tableau of the zoo animals, the audience laughed. As participants were walking to the next performance site, I overheard them saying that they did not know that information about the history of Apache Junction. We offered chips and salsa that participants partake in which was to represent a ritual done at Dirtwater Springs Restaurant.

Average hours spent on program as group:
24 hours meeting as a group, including working at Dirtwater Springs Restaurants for a total of 4 hours. Additionally as individuals worked for Mark (15 hours), Claire (20 hours), and Donta (15 hours), and Ira (3 hours) Breakdown by hours. 3 hours at school on 03/07, 3 hours with Brenda, Alyssa, and Dirtwater Springs staff on 03/21, 2 hours interviewing Brenda, Melanie, and David on 03/23, 3 hours devising piece (included phone call with Brenda from restaurant) on 03/28, 4 hours rehearsing in situ on 04/04 including dropping by flyers at the library and restaurant, 3 hours rehearsal on site on 04/11 includes interaction with local AJ community members who stopped into rehearsal. 18 contact hours with AJ.
Group:
Tiana Turner, Young Nae Choi, Jisun Myung, Sarah Dolens-Moon

Type of activities:
Ghost story performance, Library Visit, Earth Heart Park – Bluegrass festival, Interview day, park visit, rehearsal at the park x2, and AJ high school visit and class

What did the program participants bring to the table:
Group Members: Creative Capital, Cultural capital, and human capital.
City: Our team met and interviewed with AJ's community members at a local store, a museum and a visitor's center to collect stories. We crafted our storytelling performance based on those interviews.
Audience: Human Capital and Social Capital (Bridging).

How did program participants become connected?
Participants interacted with the designed storyline by looking through the hole on the cactus we made. Audiences reacted to the ghost stories of our group with laugh and 'woo' sound. Jisun's puppet theatre was a huge hit! Moreover, participants left their thoughts and reflection on a cardboard heart which was a symbol of the perlata heart map story.

Average hours spent on program as group?
22 hours as a group including interviews in communities, scouting sites, devising story, build props, evening rehearsal. Jisun, Tiana, Sarah average of 6 hours on own. Young Nae average of 9 on own.

Specifics on Interviews:
Interviewed: Helen at Visitor Center = 1 hour Jim Swanson at the Superstition Museum = 1 hour Dennis at the Antique store = 1 hour