

# Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding Project Evaluation



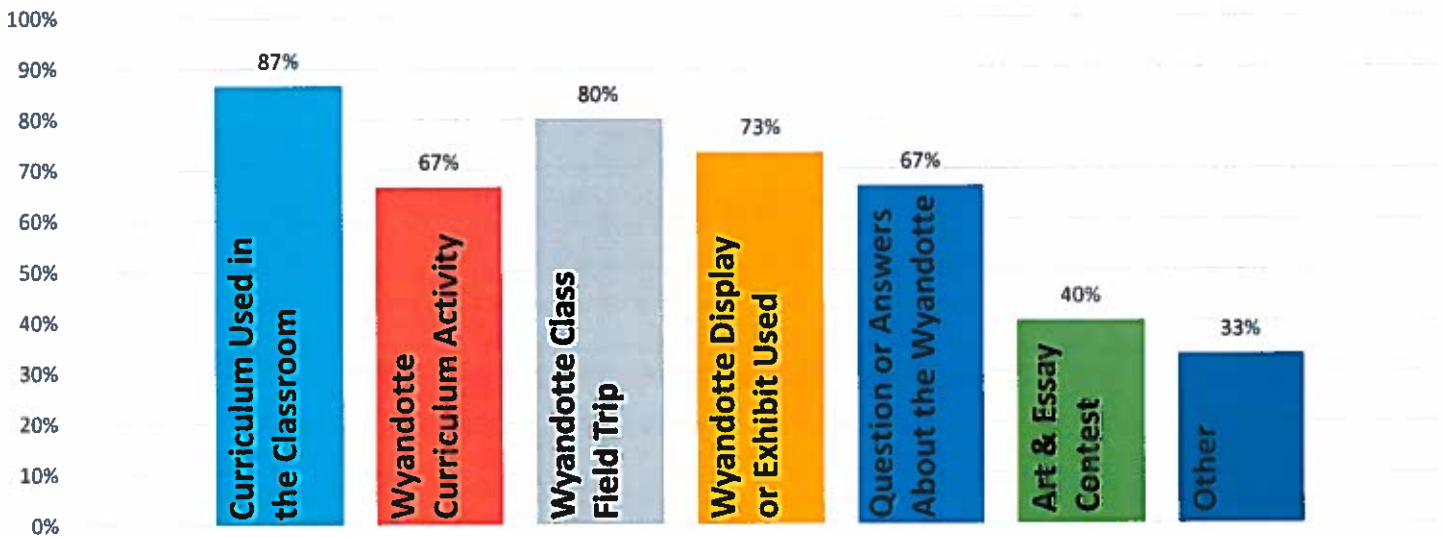
Wyandotte Journey Educators from Michigan at the Wyandotte Nation in Oklahoma, July 2015.

The Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding produced:

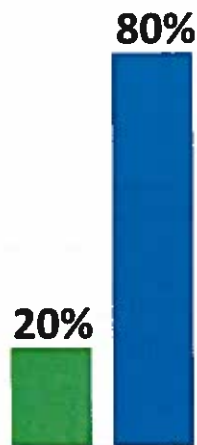
- A connection for the Wyandotte people to their heritage beginning the process of racial healing and understanding;
- Accurate information for the Wyandotte and educators to pass on to the next generations;
- A desire for the Wyandotte people to learn more about their own personal Journey.;
- A reconnection for many Wyandotte with their ancestral lands and heritage;
- An understanding among educators of how little they really knew about Native American history resulting in inaccurate preconceived notions about Native Americans being dispelled and discarded;
- A change in the way educators have been teaching Native American history for decades – giving the Wyandotte a voice in classrooms for the first time;
- An appreciation for the adaptive resilience of the Wyandotte;
- A passion among educators to accurately share Native American history with students;
- An awakening in the hearts and minds of students and educators to the hardships forced on tribes and the continuing social justice and sovereignty issues facing tribal nations still today as a result of United States Indian Policy;
- A new understanding of the perspectives of other people groups has resulted in new tools for students to analyze and resolve conflict;
- Changed lives in positive ways, built new friendships and created new alliances to further transform how American history is taught by removing the gag that prevented the truth about Native Americans' profound contributions and harsh treatment that has produced ignorance for two centuries;
- Initiated the educational solution that will begin to dismantle the inequities and reduced opportunities tribal citizens continue to face today; and
- An awareness of the current United States Indian Policy that continues to force Native Americans to be segregated to be eligible for treaty benefits promised to them by the government in exchange for their ancestral land.
- A dialog on government discrimination against large segments of Native Americans inflicted by policies designed to reduce the cost of treaty rights owed to tribal citizens by forcing tribes to meet blood quantum requirements.

Twenty-two educators were randomly selected from the group of educators known to have participated in the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding. Of the 22 educators, two were curriculum specialists, one was a videographer, one was a college professor, one was a museum educator and 17 were classroom teachers. The teachers reported that they represented 969 students who engaged in educational opportunities developed through the Journey Towards Understanding. One teacher did not report the number of students that participated. The significant change results of the Journey far exceeded the team's expectation and the overall impact has been transformative. The results on the following pages will give you a glimpse into the power of the Journey Towards Understanding.

### Percentage of Educators Who Used or Participated in the Following Journey Towards Understanding Programs or Activities



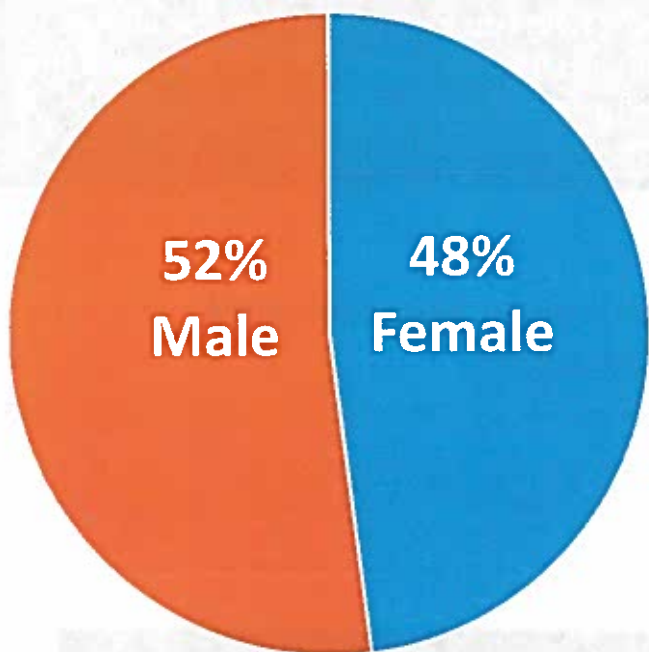
### Amount of Time Educators Spent Using Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding Resources



The vast majority, 87% of educators used the curriculum in the classroom. Many educators reported that they also shared it with other teachers in their schools and that the other teachers had used it as well.

100% of Educators spent more than 2 hours teaching materials developed during the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding. The vast majority, 80% spent multiple days and well over 4 hours teaching students from the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding resources.

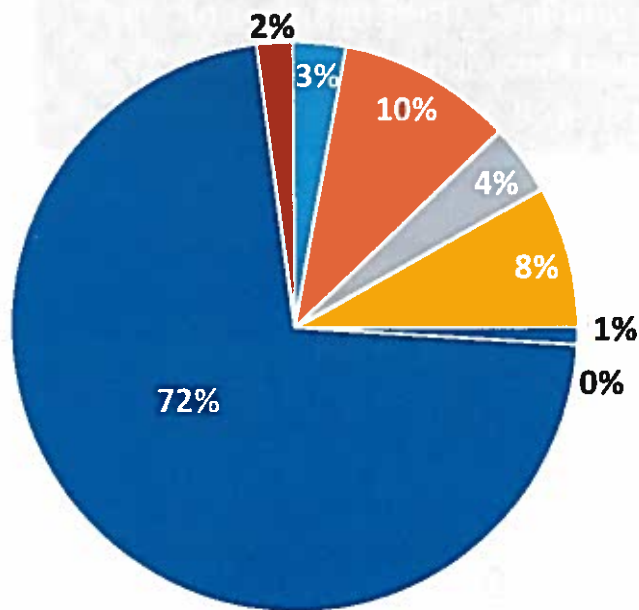
### Gender of Wyandotte Journey Student Participants



The reported student participants were from diverse genders and ethnic backgrounds, but did represent a high percentage of Caucasian students.

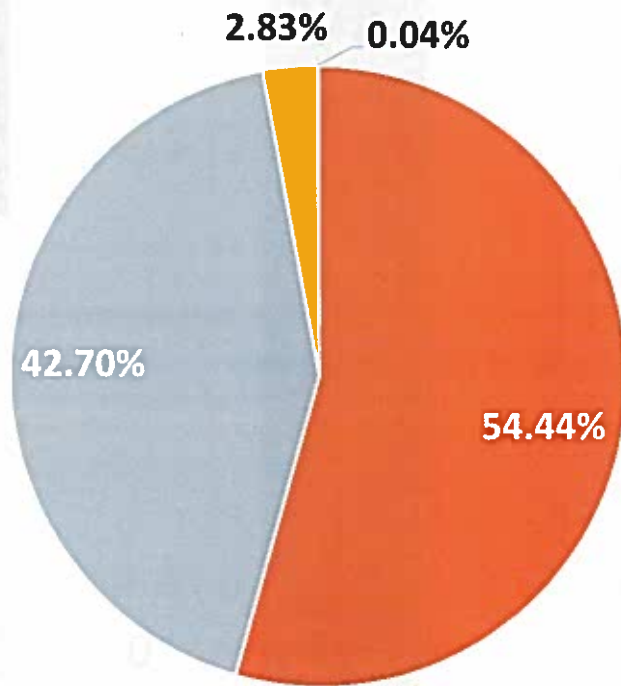
Students from all levels of primary and secondary education participated in the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding. The most common age of student participants was from age 8 to 18.

### Wyandotte Journey Student Participant Ethnicity



- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino or Spanish
- Indigenous
- Multi-Racial
- Pacific Islander
- White
- (Other) India

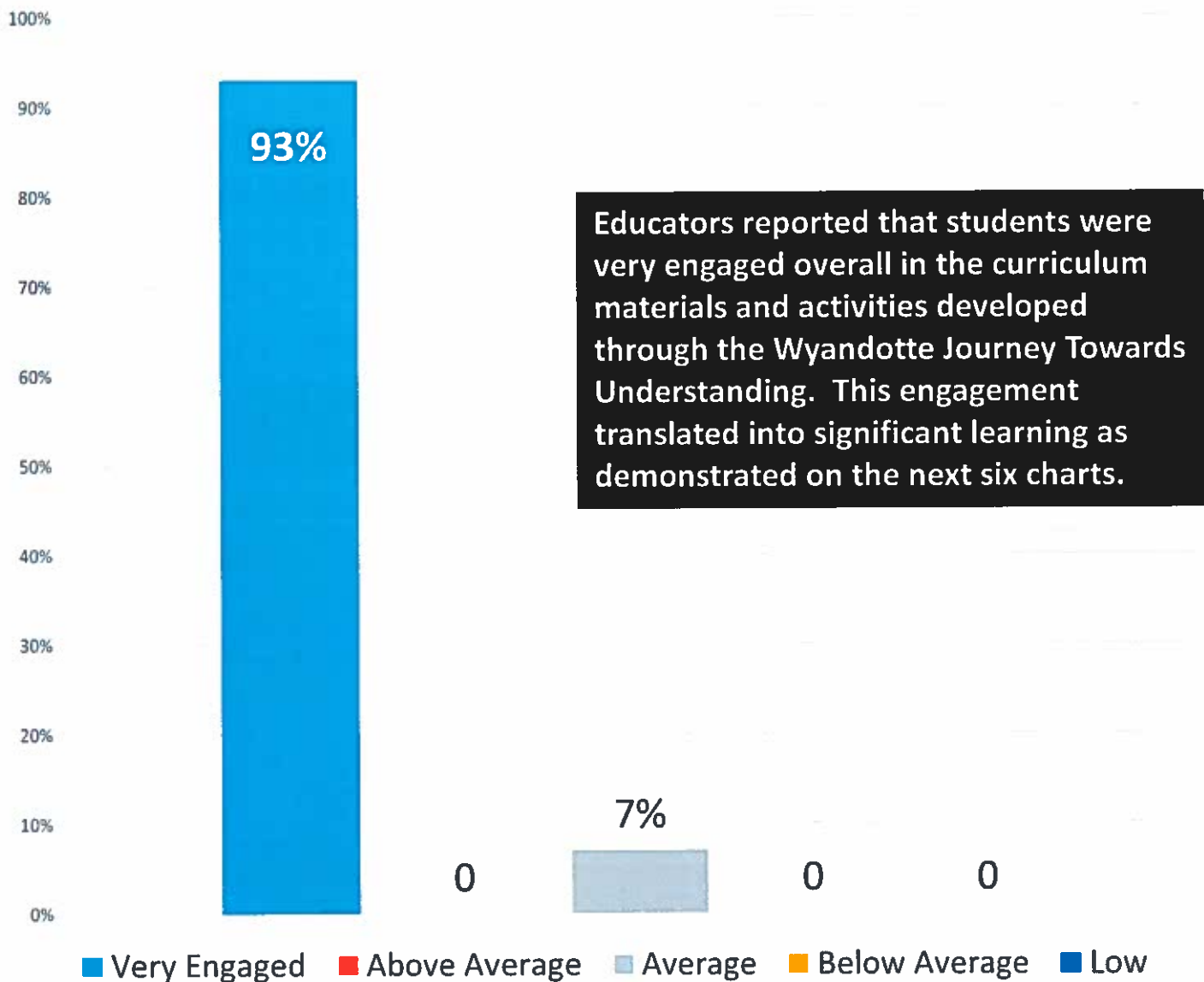
### Age of Wyandotte Journey Student Participants



- Under 8
- Age 8 to 11
- Age 13 to 18
- Age 19 to 25

The teachers interviewed reported that they had a total of 969 students that participated. Of the 969 students, 964 (99%) participated in classroom activities and 331 (34%) participated in field trips to the Battlefield related to the Wyandotte and Native American history. The 331 field trip students represents 7% of the students who participated in the Wyandotte Native American Day field trips during the 2015 and 2016 school years (4,853 students). Based on the percentage of students that used the curriculum, but did not come on a field trip, combined with the known number of field trip participants, it is estimated that at least 14,134 students benefited from the Journey Towards Understanding classroom activities in the State of Michigan during the pilot implementation.

### Level of Student Engagement in Curriculum Materials and Activities about the Wyandotte

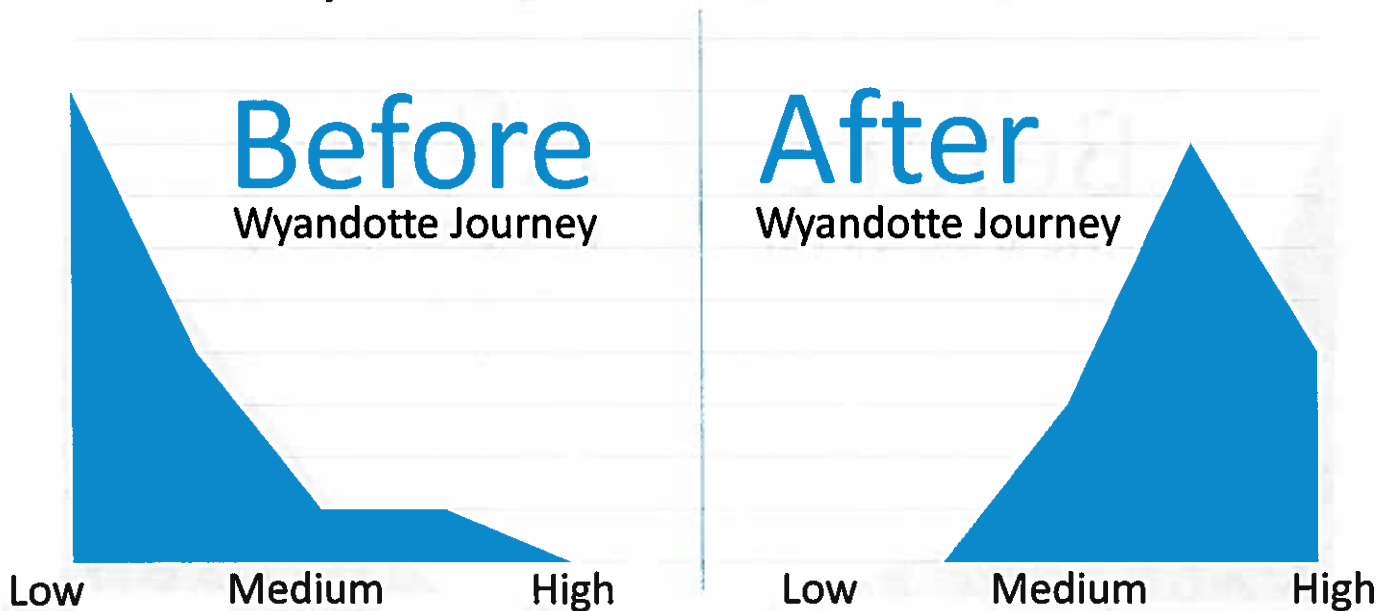


## Student Understanding of the History and Culture of the Wyandotte People



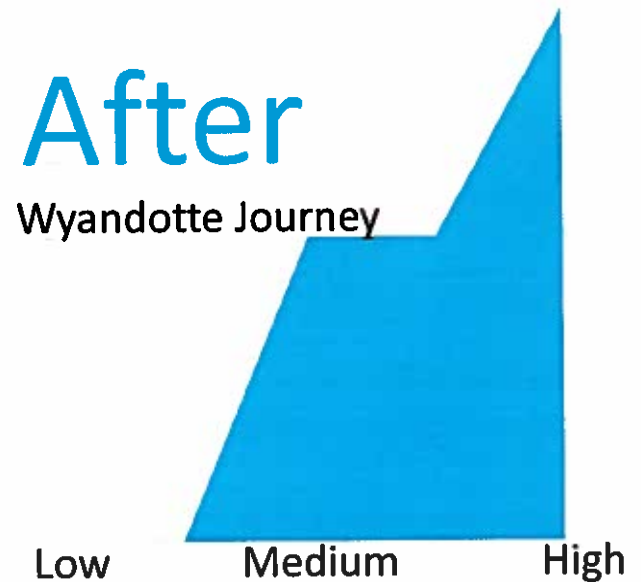
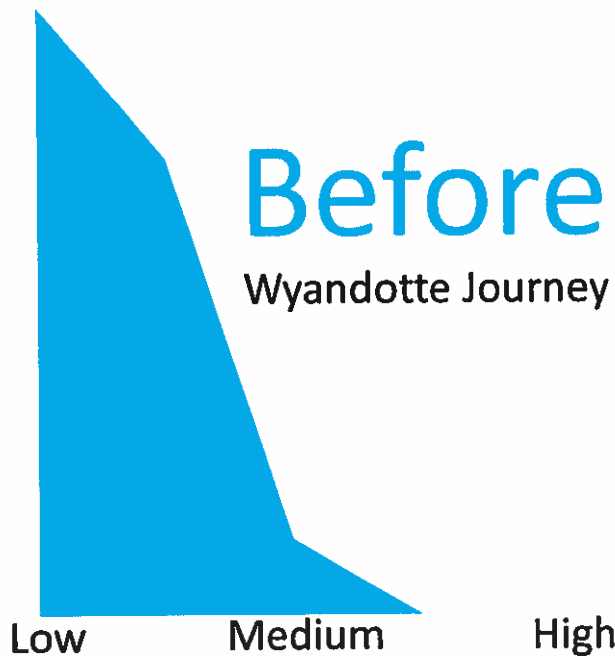
Before participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students knew very little to nothing about the history and culture of the Wyandotte people. By participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students gained a high level of understanding of Wyandotte history and culture.

## Student Understanding of the Contributions the Wyandotte have made to the United States



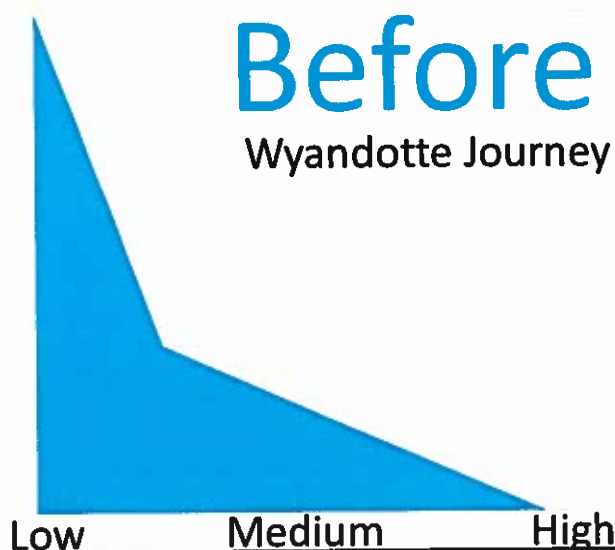
Before participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students knew very little to nothing about the contributions the Wyandotte people have made to the United States. By participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students gained a much better understanding of Wyandotte's contributions to the United States.

## Student Understanding of the Racial Inequities that the Wyandotte Encountered



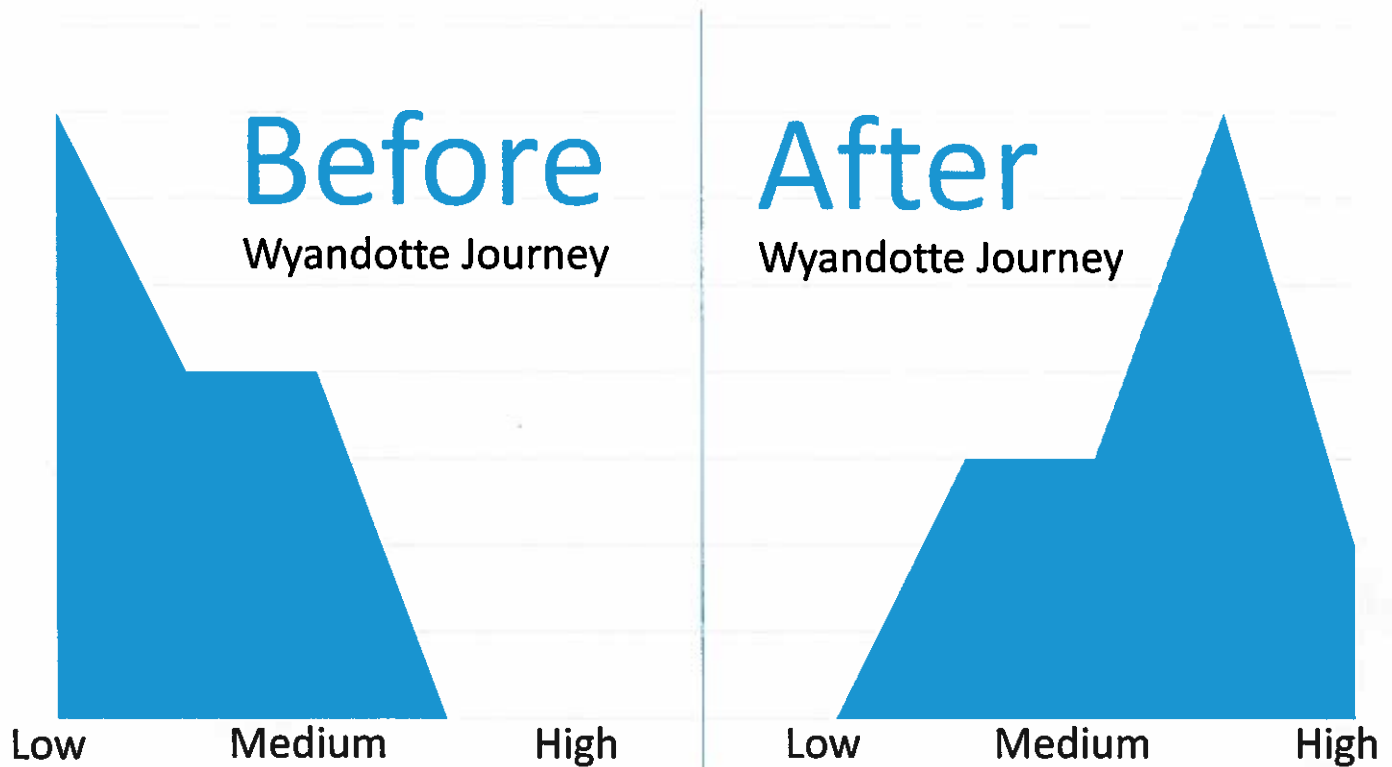
Before participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students knew very little to nothing about the racial inequities that the Wyandotte people encountered in history. By participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students gained a much better understanding of racial inequities the Wyandotte have faced.

## Student Understanding of the Relevancy of the Wyandotte People to Michigan Today



Before participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students knew very little to nothing about the relevancy of the Wyandotte people to Michigan Today. By participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students gained a high level of understanding of the relevancy of the Wyandotte in Michigan today.

## Student Understanding of Conflict Resolution Options



Before participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students knew a moderate amount to nothing about options to resolve conflict. By participating in the Journey Towards Understanding, students gained an improved level of understanding options for conflict resolution.

### Student Evaluation:

93 students from three schools were randomly selected to complete an exit evaluation from field trip experiences. 95% of the responses to open ended questions indicated the students learned something specific about the Wyandotte people during their field trip experience. Students exhibited the most increase in knowledge about the Wyandotte Language followed by Wyandotte Artifacts, Drums, Dances, Wyandotte Today, Wyandotte Games, Native Plants and the Wyandotte Removal. 95% of students that responded expressed that they enjoyed the field trip. The most enjoyed learning station was the Wyandotte Dancing followed by Lacrosse and then the Farwell & Removal station. The remaining stations received similar acknowledgement as the student's favorite.



## **Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding Evaluation**

### **Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding Intangible Results:**

Intangible results reflect intellectual and emotional changes that have taken place as a result of the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding. Some of these are deeply personal and others transcend to many people. Intangible results also reflect increased understanding and learning as exemplified through student evaluation. The intangible results were produced by the implementation of the tangible products and resulted in significant change experiences as evidenced by recorded responses at the end of the 2015 educators Journey Experience and participant evaluation conducted nearly two years after the project was launched. Some examples of the intangible results include the following:

**From Wyandotte Tribal Citizens:** A total of 17 tribal participants were interviewed to determine the impact for the Journey Towards Understanding on the Wyandotte Nations. The following are their stories:

**Kiana VanZanten, Wyandotte Youth age 18 at the time of the Journey and age 20 when interviewed.**

“The Journey helped open my eyes to know my own history. Before the Journey I did not know what it meant to be Wyandotte or what being Wyandotte meant. As a result of the Journey, I now understand what it means to be Wyandotte. I went back to California and shared what I learned with my family. This was a launching point for my mom researching her own family story.... I now feel a very special connection with the Wyandotte Nation, even though I live in California. I feel this project was very significant because learning from the history I know now what being Wyandotte is. It is very important to me now that I am Wyandotte. I know now where we came from and who we are today. It is no longer just a name. American history is so much more than the 13 Colonies on the east coast. It was a really wonderful experience. The Journey was a much better experience than I had expected. At the beginning I was just told I was going to go on a bus trip with a bunch of older folks, but it turned out amazing! I am very grateful to everyone who organized the experience.”

**Grand Chief Ted Roll, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation**

“The most significant change I observed was that the teachers wanted take a new and different approach to teaching this piece of history. They wanted to be more accurate. I could tell this happened, because the teachers brought the kids to Native American Days.”

**Deryl Wright, Wyandotte Nation Cultural Committee & Tribal Elder**

“The Journey gave the tribe, and the Cultural Committee, the bigger picture. Specifically, the Michigan and Ohio part of our history, which previously was not well understood. The Cultural Committee now passes on what we have learned to other tribal members. It made us, as a Nation, more informed. Now the Chief even takes this information to Wyandottes around the country. It has raised awareness within the tribe of where we came from and what we are all about. We are better able to understand and communicate tribal history. I think the original purpose of the Journey was to educate educators, but in the process, it educated us too. You will never know how much you have helped us, the Wyandotte as a Nation. Culture doesn't just happen. It is built, and it is built continually.”

**David Culver, Wyandotte Nation Cultural Committee**

"The most significant change from the Journey was in myself. I got a real awareness of ties to the land in Michigan and elsewhere. I enjoyed the partnership with the National Park Service, educators and all of the specialists. It brought history to life and tied present to roots. As a tribal citizen, I learned more who we are as a people and now share that with future generations. It is a partnership to protect history. Prior to the Journey, most of the people in the Tribe did not realize their history. The Journey developed an interest in where we came from. It was very important psychologically, because now we now know where we came from. ...As a former federal employee, it was good to see government agencies have come full circle from trying to hide the history of what was done to Native Americans to now telling the story. It is important to show how far we have come as a country. It is a change in the mindset of the people."

**Second Chief Norman Hildebrand, Wyandotte Nation**

"History has been taught with a bias out of textbooks that the teachers are given. Now, educators can teach from something other than a textbook. Hopefully with their new tools they will teach more perspectives in the classroom. We hope that what has started with the Journey will trickle down and spread across the country over the generations. The thing I liked the best was the final dinner with everyone sharing what they had learned. Some said they had taught history wrong for 20 to 25 years, but now they would teach history correctly. As far as I was concerned we had met the entire goal of the trip! ... The project will also get the history out about other tribes as well. The Journey has opened the eyes of tribal members to learn our own history first hand. ... The Journey was a tremendous experience."

**Debbie Dry, Wyandotte Nation Cultural Committee**

"I had been to some of the places in Michigan and Ohio before, but this was the first time with the Cultural Committee and some of the elders. The entire Journey was a connection for me to the past. Being there in person is a totally different experience. Being there feels spiritual. You don't get that from reading about it. The Journey increased my respect for my ancestors, because what they suffered allowed us to be where we are today as a Tribe... Every year we have summer interns. I can now share my Journey experience with them, how it made me feel. Passing on the experience to the next generation in preparation for them to go, or in case they cannot go, on the Journey themselves... Everyone who goes on a Journey might not get all of it, but they will get something. Something will stand out and grab their heart..."

**Danielle Lowler, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation**

"I felt like the trip triggered my own personal journey. It inspired me to learn, grow, and research more and more of my own story. I have become involved with other Native Nations now as well. I have even traveled to Montana to help with efforts there. I have been learning my own identity along the way. It is important to me, because it is MY identity. America is a melting pot of many cultures. I don't have to give up myself to become this ideal American identity. That doesn't exist. I need to maintain self, while becoming part of this nation. The Wyandot of Anderdon were unknown, went into hiding, and did not go to Oklahoma or Canada. We are here, have always been here and near here. I want to educate our area about the Wyandot. I want our area to recognize that we are here and who we are."

**Larry Hamilton, Wyandotte Nation**

"During the trip I watched the teachers change when they learned the truth. I am sure the teachers will pass this information on to their students. The Journey exposed the truth of history, not necessarily what has been written. It expanded the knowledge of those on the trip. We know as a tribe that there is more interest in learning about what actually happened. It is good to know that others want to learn about the Wyandotte. The tribe benefits when the truth is being told more than what is written in text books. ...It also expanded my own knowledge of events and what actually happened in multiple different places."

**Tom Lowler, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation**

"...one thing I noticed was that a lot of people, who were along for the ride, began to learn the historical significance of our area and specifically the Anderdon role in that. The trip also solidified relationships between the Anderdon and National Park Service. The Journey helped the Anderdon understand our own ancestors and what they did in this area. Our own history. The main significance is that the Wyandot of Anderdon members are gaining knowledge of their real past and history... We will help present history in detail, accurately, for future generations. This will help the Anderdon. Personally, I saw things on the Journey that I knew and understood, but I had not seen it. I had only read about it... When you actually see you understand the significance of a specific place more. I think this was important and helped the Wyandot of Anderdon have greater pride in their ancestry and position here. We now understand our own tribal history."

**Brenda Roll, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation – Michigan**

"After hearing people on the Journey speak, I realized there was more interest from others about the Journey than I had realized. I did not realize there were so many people interested in the history of the Wyandot. It is important because sparking the interest potentially means more people becoming involved and learning about their ancestry. The project will raise the involvement of the members of the tribe. It was interesting to see other people's reaction to learning about their ancestors' involvement in history, and how it affected them. Some were hearing their history accurately for the first time. It was different than what the history books tell."

**D'Arcy Tamaro, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation – Michigan**

"Because of the outreach that is happening through the Journey, it is strengthening relationships and awareness in our community of what happened here and the significance of how that effects today. People are not generally aware of the historical things that happened here. I think they should know. I am glad word is getting out. If the Wyandot parents have the knowledge base they will pass it on to their children and to the children that come to visit Six Points. It is all about carrying things forward. There is a lot of excitement contributed to the Journey. It does nothing but help the future. Everything around the program is helping."

**Chief Billy Friend, Wyandotte Nation – Oklahoma**

“The Journey has enabled us as a Nation to understand our own Journey as a tribe. We have taken the concept of the Journey to apply to individuals and families. We challenge citizens to research or find their own Journey. One of the most significant things is the title ‘Journey Towards Understanding’. This Journey was a seed that started the process of many Wyandotte on their personal Journey. The Journey is growing each tribal citizen into understanding their own personal Journey, whether they are early or late in their Journey. We want to expand on the original Journey, it is now an even more personal matter. The Journey was very educational and enlightening. It was important to be able to further our own knowledge of our ancestors, to see what they went through, and see how they persevered to enable us to be where we are as a Nation today. For those of us who participated on the Journey, we now fully embrace that part of our history. Although we had seen pieces of our history before, we got to put all of the pieces together on this Journey. It laid a foundation for the tribe that we can continue to build upon.”

**Loretta Combes, Wyandotte Nation – Oklahoma**

“The most significant change occurred in those who went on the Journey. All of the Wyandotte and all of the educators now have a more open mind to what actually happened and can relate more to it, since they have been there. It was important to me, because it is my history, and I want it to be shared and taught correctly. The Journey has showed us by being there that the climate has changed and we are now able to say, teach, and learn what really happened without sugar coating it.”

**Jill Ross, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation, Michigan**

“There was an interesting group of people on the Journey, some who fought on each side. Everyone gained knowledge of the others’ perspective and the others’ loss. We learned how clever the Wyandot of Anderdon were to just cross back into Canada, so they did not have to be removed. It was really good that the tribe had the adaptability to thrive in adverse situations. The places we went made me really sad. The Journey will help the tribe because educating brings understanding. Education is always good. I hope this will help get the Wyandot of Anderdon federal recognition. I was thankful for the opportunity to experience these places that my ancestors walked. Especially the blessing at Six Points, because it was a personal reckoning for me. The hardest part for me was the realization of how our ancestors must have felt when they recognized they could no longer hold back the progress of white settlers. The lifestyle the tribe had known was over.”

**Judy Kukowski, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation – Michigan**

“The significance of the Journey was not just seeing the change within the Wyandot of Anderdon, but seeing that others realize that we are here! Many people did not realize the Wyandot of Anderdon people are still here. The Journey was important for a lot of people, because it dispels the myth they had been fed that we were destroyed and did not exist anymore. It is significant because people are realizing that we exist and aren’t gone, we are here. We are having many more inquiries and new members because of the Journey. As a Wyandot of Anderdon historian, the Journey opened new avenues of information for me. I now have new sources of information to add to what I know.”

**Sharon Lezotte, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation – Michigan**

**“I was impressed with everything I learned on the Journey. I was in awe of all of the subject-matter-experts who shared. They were not Wyandot, but they were subject-matter-experts and so enthusiastic and knowledgeable... As I stood in the places or scenes, I had the realization that the history really happened HERE. I was hearing evidence and research that was telling MY story, MY past. I wish the whole tribe could go on the trip. I would love for my kids and grandkids to learn their own history. All of the presenters were genuine and kind in their presentations and made us feel comfortable. I wish that more people understood that Native Americans were more respected for being good stewards of the land, they were good people, caring, not savages. It was the best trip I have ever been on!**

**From Educators:** A total of 22 educators were interviewed to determine the educational impact of the Journey Towards Understanding. The following are the educators stories:

**Tammy Charles, Wyandotte Nation Director of Education – Oklahoma**

“The project depend my understanding of the Wyandotte Journey through removal and all that the Wyandotte people faced. Prior to the Journey, I had a limited hands on visual representation of what tribes went through. Through the journey, I got to see, feel and learn the history where it happened. Having multiple perspectives (Tribal Members, Historians and Educators) contributed to a greater, broader, and deeper understanding of the Wyandotte’s Journey. I deal with Tribal citizens of all ages and in all places across the country. Because of this experience, I am able to share with many tribal citizens their history and how it impacts the choices and decisions that are made even today. The Journey Towards Understanding has most definitely changed the way I connect with and teach history. It has given me a deeper understanding and actual visual ties to the places where the history took place... The entire removal process impacted me greatly. Traveling from Michigan to Oklahoma along the removal path increased my clarity of why tribal citizens are scattered across the country. It accounts for who and where we are... During the Journey we were able to put all of the pieces together to gain a greater understanding of the history as a whole.”

“My students gained a deeper understanding of the plight and difficulties their ancestors faced. They became more cognizant of why their elders perform ceremonies and practice their traditions as a result of understanding their history better. Before their lessons, their knowledge about Wyandotte history was very limited and superficial. After studying the history, it raised their own understanding significantly.”

**Crystal Fowler, Carlton High School Educator, Michigan – January 2017 Interview**

“Personally, I changed the way I think of the land in the Down River area and feel more connected to it. I am teaching my own children the connection between the land, the people and the history of what happened right were we now are. I have a master’s degree in environmental sciences. Learning the history of our area has enhanced my understanding of the environment. I had never realized the connection between the two before. I want to build a connection between the history and the environmental sciences. I want the students to know why that is important and for them to protect their neighborhoods and appreciate what happened in their own back yard. I want to make students better stewards of history and the environment... I was fascinated, horrified and blindsided by much of what I learned.”

**Ray Walker, Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency Educator, Michigan – January 2017 Interview**

“I developed a real understanding of why the Wyandotte Indians were moved out west. The local government would not protect them. They feared being killed... The Wyandot’s were Christians “Methodist”. We took their property and did not treat them as people. The United States Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional to remove them, but Andrew Jackson over road it. He over road the Supreme Court’s denial to remove them. I want to encourage kids to question if things are right or wrong.”

**Chris Slat, Videographer, Monroe County ISD, Michigan – January 2017 Interview**

“This project helped my understanding of Native Americans in our area. The trail of tears was an abstract concept to me before, now it is very real. I have seen and felt the struggles and pain along the Journey. This trip brought it all very close to home for me. Social studies and education are important to the future of Native American Indians as we go forward. We need to help them overcome the stereotype assigned to them. We need to correct some of the government powers that are still in play today. My personal understanding is far greater. I have more appreciation of history in general and our area in particular. I realize great historical characters are cast as either hero or villain, whereas most fall somewhere in-between, i.e. great presidents, but had no problem killing women and children that were Native American.”

**David Hales, Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency – Michigan**

“For me, with students and teachers in Wayne County, seeing their eyes open to the treasures that River Raisin National Battlefield Park has to offer is the most significant thing to emerge from the Journey Towards Understanding project. When they see, learn and appreciate what cultural resources are here and what there is available to learn from right here in their back yard, it is wonderful.”

“We did not just write curriculum, we wrote curriculum that aligns with content expectations which ensures it is more useful and more broadly used by educators in Michigan. The curriculum helps teachers teach and children learn the story of the Battlefield, while meeting content expectations. Connecting teachers and students in Wayne County to resources also helps them develop an appreciation for the resources in our community.”

“When social studies and history is discussed, it is often lacking the Native American voice. This project gave the Native Americans a voice in our classroom, which is very important. Making people aware this resource exists will help ensure the teachers and the kids become stewards of the resource. I don’t know if this is the right place to put this, but I can’t tell you how much we appreciate the transportation grants. If you have the resource near you, but students can’t get to it, it does not matter how close it is. It is very important to bring the National Park into the fold of cool stuff or cultural resources for Southeast Michigan. The project will raise community involvement and put it on the radar of places to go, a destination!”

“I have worked with many cultural resources in our area. I have never been involved in such a Journey. This was by far the best experience I have ever had with any other cultural resource.”

**Danielle Ozanich, Southeast Michigan Educator (Berkley Schools)**

“I thought when I was invited to go on the Journey that it was going to be a “History Camp for Teachers,” but it was much more than that. At Fallen Timbers, when I was standing there learning about all of the people who died there, I realized they were the ancestors of the people we were traveling with. That changed everything from a History Camp to making this something real and meaningful. Obviously, that really moved me, if 18 months later that still brings me to tears. In my teaching there is a big difference as a result of the Journey Towards Understanding. The knowledge I gained over six days has shaped and changed me dramatically in my teaching. Because my content knowledge is way better, it makes me a much better teacher. I can create more inquiry based curriculum, because I have a better knowledge base.”

"My students knew nothing before. When I told them I was going to teach them about the Wyandotte, they only thought it was a town. They did not know the Wyandotte were a people. Now, my kids are more connected with the Wyandotte from their home state to where they live today. In the beginning of my class, the students believed Indians still lived the way they did years ago, but I was able to teach them how well they are doing now and that they live just like us. Understanding about someone else's culture improves my student's decision making skills, higher level thinking, empathy, and helps them make connections to other people. They have a deeper understanding of others. My class scores show that the children are learning a lot. They are also treating different cultures with more acceptance. The students loved the curriculum materials. It was very engaging, even for the special needs kids. They were all captivated and could all participate."

"Teaching is an art. Having an opportunity to learn so much, having the binder to reference back to, and the experience itself helped me perfect my art. You are a better teacher if you know more about what you are teaching. It was such an awesome experience! I loved every minute of it! I have shared the lessons with other schools in the district and have mentored the teachers!"

**Rosemary Johnson, Michigan Educator, Wayne County Redford Schools**

"As a result of the Journey my personal knowledge has greatly increased. I learned more of the local connections. My family is part Native American and part European. I have been to Europe, but felt no connection. The Wyandotte however treated me like family! One young Wyandotte preschool teacher is re-teaching their native language. She is also creating audio recordings of their language."

"The battlefield at fallen timbers was not easily accessible, but worth the hike through the mud. I witnessed a four direction ceremony, which is a blessing of the ground. This was a life changing experience. We visited Ohio the same time of year the Wyandotte were forced to leave. That awareness was important, because I felt like I could be standing in their shoes preparing to leave. The Journey has absolutely changed the way I teach history. I teach more in-depth and the students enjoy my personal experience with the Wyandotte Tribe as they learn. I used a slide show of the exact places visited. My students are amazed that some Wyandotte look white. Having better content made the students more interested in the Wyandotte and resulted in better educational success. The City of Wyandotte is actually named for the Wyandotte Tribe, this amazed my students. The students' understanding before the Journey curriculum was very limited. The students appreciated the curriculum, and as a result, I had very motivated students because of it."

"I wish to share my appreciation for this experience. It was a profound experience as a teacher and as a person. The Wyandotte Tribe is impressive. Chief Billy Friend is the CEO, if you will, and runs the tribe as a company. They are willing to help any in the tribe, but everyone must be part of the process. Again, I offer my gracious thanks for the gift of opportunity that was given to me. I learned, I had fun, Thank you!"

**Patrick Ignagni, Plymouth – Canton, Michigan**

"I teach U.S. History to sophomores. As a result of the Journey, I now teach Indian Removal and Trail of Tears and westward expansion in much more detail. Chief Billy Friend, Native American Indian, shared how they deal with a not so nice past. The Native American's have an interesting perspective dealing with their legacy. Most of my career, I saw Native Americans as victims on reservations with crummy

lives. My visit with the Wyandottes told me they had a terribly difficult past, but today they are not victims, they just want to be treated fairly as Americans.”

The Journey Towards Understanding absolutely change the way I connect with and teach history. My lesson plans are more balanced and more accurate. The students level of knowledge before teaching the Journey curriculum was low to non-existent. I had my students informally debate the morality of Indian removal. The students were very much engaged in the debate of a controversial topic. It really made them think. Students had a high level of engagement while experiencing the entire Journey curriculum and finished with a high level of understanding. As I was growing up in Monroe, I had a sense of connection to the history of the Wyandottes in Gibraltar and Woodhaven. I have learned more than the generation ahead of me, and I am now able to teach even more to the generation younger than I.”

**Krista Seibert, Wagar, Airport Schools**

“My classroom teaching has changed completely as a result of the Journey Towards Understanding. Native American history is not just a two week unit or an afterthought. I teach 5<sup>th</sup> Grade History dating from the 1400’s through the Revolutionary War. Now I see and teach the Native American life and culture as it is interwoven through those years. I teach Native American history much more in-depth and included in each unit of teaching, as it should be.”

“The Journey has definitely changed the way I connect with and teach history. The major change is answering the question that is not in our books: ‘Where did they all go?’ Because I was enlightened, I saw the significance of this ignored group of people. It not only affects the Wyandotte, but other Native Nations in other regions as well. My eyes have been opened. I now teach what actually happened, because the Wyandotte are so gracious and thrilled to share openly with us. They want to be respected. They want to be truthful about the past no matter how ugly.”

“There is a strong lesson for small children – perseverance. Bad things happen, you can’t control others, or our circumstances, but you can keep on by controlling your reactions. There are choices of reactions. The Wyandotte have made great choices: to be confident, to be passionate, to be proud but not arrogant.”

“The students’ level of knowledge regarding the Wyandotte before using the curriculum was very low. The students’ engagement with the curriculum was very high. We did Wyandotte Passports and different power points, farewell flower ceremony, and then wrote about leaving – never to return. The kids keep bringing it up, they want to know more details. One student is the granddaughter of the Wyandotte of Anderdon Chief who came into the classroom in full Native American regalia. He brought items to teach. River Raisin Battlefield loaned a bow and other gear to share. The kids loved it. It is now real to them with impact. This was a wonderful experience.”

**Dawn Spears, Michigan Educator**

“The Journey did change the way I connect with and teach history. I was able to relate personally with my students what the Wyandotte endured. The Journey is vital, because it is important for students to know the history to relate to the immigrant movement now. Also how different the land can be as you move and the need to adapt. For example, the Wyandotte here lived by the river, but Oklahoma was much drier. The Journey itself made me understand and feel the uprooted feeling of the Wyandotte. I

can empathize with people who might be in that situation now. I had my students pack a suitcase so they could see the struggle of what to choose and what to leave behind forever. We have also been able to visit with the Wyandotte in Monroe, giving us a much closer connection. We were able to hear the Wyandotte story from one of the Chiefs who came to speak to us.”

“My students’ level of knowledge before using the curriculum was very little. My students really enjoyed the curriculum. They actually learned words from the Wyandotte language and enacted being part of the tribe. The Journey allows students to be more aware of Native Americans in our area. They are more sympathetic to a diversity of people.”

**Carolyn Waterbury, Michigan Educator**

“It was an honor to be part of this project. I was a member of the educators traveling with the Wyandotte members to historical sites/battlefields documenting their removal to Wyandotte Oklahoma. I have a heightened personal awareness of the Wyandotte Tribe. I am able to teach my students more accurately about the removal acts that sent the Wyandottes to Oklahoma. It was a matter of go, or be killed. Some older tribal members shared that they were told not to admit to being Indian for their own safety. The River Raisin Battlefield is getting more recognition as well as the great things the National Park is doing. We need to increase awareness of Native American tribes as well as all the services the National Park Service provides to educate people regarding the history of our country including the personal experiences.”

“The Journey has undoubtedly changed the way I connect with and teach history. I started world history early to include Native American tribes of North America in much more detail. I received the knowledge to share about Cahokia Mounds in Illinois. These mounds existed before the whites arrived. The Wyandotte are a matriarchal tribe. The women have a lot of power; they historically name the Chiefs and the children. They seem to be peaceful people with a rich culture. Is it due to feminine influence? They have National Sovereignty; they are a Nation within a Nation, with the rights to preserve their culture. They work together.”

“My students knowledge before using the Journey curriculum we developed was non-existent. The students were very engaged in the curriculum and saw beyond the stereotype. Some students with tribal blood are now more interested in learning about their heritage. It was truly an honor to be part of this project. This experience will continue resonating as time goes on.”

**Brandi Platte, Michigan Educator**

“The Journey absolutely changed the way I connect and teach history. I felt firsthand the experience of talking with the Wyandotte, going through displacement with them, and all of the stops along the way. I have great empathy for their cause. I can honestly say, the most significant change is that I now know the Trail of Tears was even more devastating in the north than in the south with the Cherokee and that was terrible. It has made me a better educator, because no matter what age group I talk to, I work in some of the Wyandotte history. We need to share this information about a whole group of people that have been left off of the books. It is an injustice to them, as well as the rest of us who live here.”

“Prior to teaching the Journey curriculum, my students understanding about the Native Americans was very limited. The curriculum was highly effective. I have seen evidence in our discussions on how this has influenced our students. My students see that the government does not have all of the answers and

that there are more different ways to solve problems. The lessons from the Wyandotte and social injustice are now related to their own lives. They are finding alternative ways to solve problems with each other.”

“I am impressed by the Wyandotte sense of community and how they reach out to help others. This was an extraordinary experience! I am sure it was expensive, but well worth it to be sharing all of this new information accurately.”

**Chuck Estep, Michigan Educator – Monroe ISD**

“As a result of the Journey, I now see the Wyandotte Nation, under Chief Billy Friend, as a generous people with a high level of ingenuity. Because of the Wyandotte approach in reaching out to us on the Journey, I have come to love the Wyandotte. All they wanted was to live in peace and get along with others, yet they were still mistreated by the government. They still want to reach out and share their story. By the Wyandotte’s willingness to reach out and share, I am able to share with children an accurate story of the Wyandotte Nation. I am able to share personally when I teach children to be respectful of others that are different than us. Learning Wyandotte history is also teaching us white history. My heart and mind have been opened. The Wyandotte have helped make me a much better consultant, teacher and person. I am so honored to be involved with the Wyandotte. This was a wholly educational moment in my life.”

**Trish Schurkamp, Kansas Museum Educator**

“The most significant change I see is a stronger knowledge of Wyandotte history to pass on to children. My light bulb moment happened as I stood on that Battlefield; I felt how they felt there, saw what happened, how it happened, and why it happened. The Journey Towards Understanding has changed the way I connect to and teach history. I am now able to convey this history to my students, grades K-12, with visual pictures and images verses just words. I am more acutely aware of the suffering of all Nations. It was a phenomenal trip!”

**Dr. Sandy Norton, Eastern Michigan University Professor**

“I was President of the Faculty Center at Eastern Michigan University. I was thrilled to be invited to go on this Journey. I went to learn. I returned to share the information with the University. This Journey completely changed my understanding of the Wyandotte and all Native American people in general. I now share this story with everyone, including my students, because it is so different from my history. This Journey taught me that not only in history, but even now, people are still mistreated. I learned how the tribes function and what they are doing to preserve their history and culture today.”

“The trip name was wonderful! Journey Towards Understanding was a great way to focus on the Wyandotte tribe. I saw what an amazing people they are, not at all the supposed ‘savages’ as some history depicts. The way the Wyandotte were scattered is a horrible story. Some went North, some South, some to a boarding school where they tried to wipe out the Native American in the Wyandotte children. It bears an uncanny, unnerving resemblance to what happened in Africa where people became slaves. Here we tried to decimate the tribes. I now share a more complete and accurate history of the Wyandotte Nation.”

"I cannot describe how grateful I am to have taken the Journey and for all of the dedicated teachers on the bus. They put their whole hearts into what they were teaching us. I say, if you ever get a chance to take this Journey, do it! Thank you."

**Kelly Bacus, Michigan Educator**

"Being invited to participate on the Journey was quite an honor to receive. It was a life changing experience. The Journey changed my life in several ways. It changed my entire view of the Native Americans and their Relocation."

**Mrs. Wickenheiser, St. Patricks**

"Participating in the Journey had a good impact. We did a virtue project on the changes in the treatment of the Wyandotte and other Native Tribes from the early days (i.e. boarding schools) to today. The students are much more apt to support Indian rights and are more tolerant of others. The students really enjoyed putting their ideas onto paper, researching on the internet to make sure what they were doing was right."

**Gail Schmidt, Eyler Elementary**

"The students had some knowledge before the Journey, but their knowledge grew through the activities. The students have come to understand the Wyandotte better and have more compassion for people who are different from themselves. The students really enjoyed every part of the field trip, they were actively engaged and wanted to stay longer."

**Carey Ivey, Home School Group**

"Before the Journey field trip our children had a very low understanding about Native Americans. Thoroughly enjoyed the field trip and got a lot from it! The students have a better awareness."

**Meg Fedorouicz, Michigan Educator**

"The Journey curriculum helped a lot. It raised cultural awareness, and they recognized unfair treatment of natives, especially the taking of their land. Loved it!"

**Heather Kokosky, St. Patricks**

"The Journey produced more involvement from the students than many subjects. The students just could not get enough. Even when we moved on to a new subject many continued reading and researching more about the Wyandotte. The students were adamant that everyone should be treated equally, and they realized that the Wyandotte and other Native people have not always been. The students were very engaged! I look forward to doing it again next year."

**From Historians, Staff and Volunteers:** A total of 10 staff and volunteers were interviewed to determine the educational impact of the Journey Towards Understanding. The following are the staff and volunteer stories:

**Jami Keegan, National Park Service Staff – Michigan**

“Through the Journey Towards Understanding, I have a greater awareness of the much larger story the Battlefield tells. I am now able to impart more knowledge to visitors at the Battlefield. I received more than one viewpoint and can help teach it to the younger generations. I have more accurate details to share not only at the Battlefield, but also with my son. My son is now sharing this information with his friends and classmates. I studied Native American History in college, but did not realize it was in my own backyard. This was a great opportunity for me...”

**Shawna Mazur, National Park Service Staff – Michigan**

“During the Journey Towards Understanding, I learned about the Wyandotte perspective of the River Raisin Battlefield and much more about their way of life. The Journey has absolutely changed the way I connect to and teach history. I am now able to explain the Native American perspective much better. My eyes have been opened, and I now work to break stereotype molds others have. The mistreatment of the Wyandotte people and all the other First Nations is so sad. I think it is wonderful how willing the Wyandotte people are to work with us, helping us to understand their story. Even when it makes them feel vulnerable.”

**Chris Kull, Battlefield Foundation Staff and National Park Volunteer – Michigan**

“During the Journey, I saw the people on the bus learn dramatically more about the Native American Indians. Fallen Timbers Battlefield in Perrysburg, Ohio made me realize Wyandotte people traveled here and fought alongside the people from Frenchtown at this time (1795). They were on the same side at this point in time. I have a better understanding of what happened, where and when. Some Wyandot’s went to Canada and were no longer federally recognized as a tribe. Some went to Upper Sandusky, Ohio in the 1840’s before going out west. Our stop at Six Points in the Gibraltar area was exciting and had a big impact on me. They want to develop this into a tribal refuge. The Wyandotte’s of Oklahoma have joined with the Wyandot of Anderdon to purchase the property hoping to build an education center to be open to the public and a ceremonial center to be private for the Wyandotte, perhaps opened periodically to the public. I have been included in a commemoration ceremony where they acknowledged the six points. North, South, East, West, Up\Heaven, and Down\Earth. It was a great learning experience.”

**Maryne Bentley, Battlefield Volunteer, Michigan**

“During the Journey Towards Understanding, I was amazed by how warm, loving, open and welcoming the Wyandotte are to anyone interested in their story. I went on the Journey to serve and help others and ended up feeling served and cared for myself. The Wyandotte feel like family. The Journey started with more of an ‘us and them’ mentality and ended with a ‘we’ mentality. I can share more from my heart. I was amazed that there does not seem to be any animosity or grudge held against those responsible for their trail of tears or trail of death. They state the facts, but focus on how they have overcome the hardships rather than focusing on the hardship itself.”

**Charlie Middleton, Battlefield Volunteer, Michigan**

“As a result of the Journey, I feel connected to First Nations peoples. It was great that they were on the trip. I want to learn all I can about what they went through. Being at Fort Wayne was very moving for me, because my heritage was a French Voyager. The Journey actually makes me want to be more involved, do more reading, and research to know more about the War of 1812... The Journey will make me a better living historian. I enjoyed getting to know the people [Wyandotte] more. I liked to hear the people’s story. The whole experience was wonderful.”

**Toni Cooper, Battlefield Volunteer, Michigan**

“The Journey was an awakening to me personally. It woke me up to realize the true history of Michigan and the extensive involvement of the Native Americans. The Journey is important, because I am now more aware of other people and the impact that history has on me today and in the future. So I can teach my kids. The Journey has changed the way I connect to and teach history. Now I have a story to tell that I never knew before. I tell everybody the story. The biggest impact on me was the conflict of leadership. Treaties signed and treaties broken changed my perspective on how I look at leaders. It is more important than ever to me now to do what I say I will do and watch my leaders to see if they do what they say they will do. I recognized the pride the Native American’s had and that they wanted to protect their land and country. It was worth fighting for. I wish all Americans had the same pride in our country like the Native Americans do. I think everybody should have an opportunity to go on this trip!”

**Rusty Davis, Battlefield Volunteer, Michigan**

“The biggest change I saw as a result of the Journey was within myself. I have more empathy and understanding of what Native Americans went through. I learned what this land and area meant to them. We all need to understand what Journey people have been on. What lead them, shaped them, before this point in history. The Journey has changed the way I connect with and teach history, because I now have a realization that these folks were displaced from their land and heritage and culture. The Journey changed the way I look at things. I was trying to understand how they must have felt and that has affected me. The Journey was a very interesting day, and I enjoyed interacting with the variety of people on the bus.”

**Dana McLeod, Battlefield Volunteer, Michigan**

“The Journey helped me better understand what they [Native Americans] went through and where they went through it. I am visual learner, so this helped me a lot. The Journey was important because I had no prior knowledge of any of it. It has given me a desire to learn more... I have information to share. The Journey showed me that I have much more to learn and gave me the desire to learn more.”

**Kara Walker, Battlefield Student Conservation Corps Staff**

“After the tour, I realized how much I did not know. I feel lead to help develop the park more so there will be future tours for others. The Journey is important so that we learn to not make the same mistakes over and over again. It is important to everyone’s morale to continue moving forward... Even though I had to get up really early to go, it was worth it.”

**Nathan Seger, Battlefield Staff, Michigan**

“During the Journey I saw the bigger spectrum of Native American history. How they lost not only their land and burial grounds, but so many lives... I learned there is much more to learn. We need to dig deeper to get accurate information.”

**Other Key Thoughts:**

The Wyandotte Nation sent several delegations of members from Oklahoma to Michigan as a part of the Wyandotte Journey Towards Understanding. These Journeys included groups of Wyandotte Youth, Wyandotte Elders, and the Cultural Committee who worked with area educators. As a result of reconnecting with their ancestral lands, the Wyandotte Nation has purchased 16 acres of land that was once part of the Wyandot Village of Brownstown and are in the process of putting that land into Trust. Once in Trust, the Wyandotte Nation has expressed a desire to work with the National Park Service, Wyandot of Anderdon Nation and community partners to develop an education center to benefit all people. This site will serve as the Brownstown Unit of River Raisin National Battlefield Park and is referred to as Six Points.

