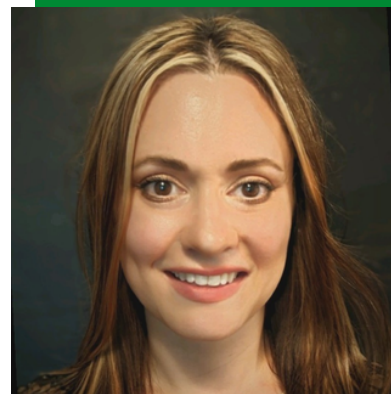


SPRING UPDATES ON THE FELLOWSHIP FOR TRIBAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Mary ZumBrunnen, Assistant Director: CCED

Over the week of April 14th, I had the pleasure of traveling to meet with three tribes in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. These included Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Bay Mills Indian Community and the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. No "up north" trip during Michigan's early spring would be complete without perfectly sunny skies and an unpredicted severe storm winter white out! I was in luck....but alas, no Northern Lights viewing as such.



During our time, we discussed a series of the new federal administration's executive orders and their potential impacts on each sovereign tribal nation as well as surrounding local economies. Additionally, we also revisited the kick-off of the Tribal Economic Resiliency Fellowship (previously scheduled for June of this year) and related shifting tides. At the end of March, northern Michigan was hit with another severe weather event that left 60,000+ people without electricity and in many cases as such, also without heat, connectivity and supplies as they tried to dig out

Michiganders are tough, but we also rely on steady access to goods and services via local and multi-national supply chains as well as infrastructure and transportation. Across the Great Lakes region, the country and world, we as humans are systems-based and social creatures. Therefore, the ideas and strategies behind the development of the tribally-identified Economic Resiliency Fellowship work scopes are aimed at helping create buffers to shock such as severe weather events or COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been reminded time and time again, most recently with a colleague walking by in the hall last week to share an old report dated back more than 20 years titled, "Realizing Health in Community" by LeRoy Harvey, then an MSU-grad student and today the Environmental Programs Coordinator for Meridian Township. Within, he states, "...Even so, many doctors, politicians, businesses, teachers, parents, etc. are often lured by their constituents into prescribing the silver bullet, the quick fix, placebo, or grease that quiets the squeak, addressing the effect, rather than the deeper roots of the problem. It doesn't help that we tend to research these problems and sicknesses through our disciplinary blinders."

Holistic care includes, in part, both community and resiliency. Efforts to build and build, even decades of dedicated work, can be wiped out in one storm, one event or one executive action. Therefore, we are reminded and must continue to be, that resiliency should be built into all that we do, allowing room to flex and bend, bud and bloom, and transcend to transform systems. Systems are only as good as the humans that crafted them and the time/place context of their need. When one fails....all will find out quickly whether or not partnerships were built upon a three-legged stool. Therefore, community and stakeholder advisory support and capacity building is a must. Not to mention work-arounds...or "Plan B".



As American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funding and other emergency funding is wound down, communities are now reeling from the lack of grant support in some cases to “right the ship” so-to-speak post COVID. As organizations with researchers working in communities across the world (and right here in our back yards) like the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation, for example, have been forced to terminate grants and conduct mass layoffs, what may seem a “drop in the bucket” to a larger bottom line, can derail one person’s entire life, devast local economies and narrow our outlooks and world view. This also fans the flames of fear, distrust and openness to new information (that may be critical to moving forward). Now, more than ever, we must be mindful of this.

Moving forward, with any partnership, as well as any and all collaborative effort, let us genuinely be mindful of one another, meaning: connect together, let go of judgement as we do not stand in one another’s shoes, and make an intentional and valid attempt to do so while offering grace. We cannot know what one another are going through, but we can rely on tried and true frameworks such as Asset-Based Doing and the Principles of Community Development.

For now, though in choppy waters, the Center for Community & Economic Development is working to find funding for the Tribal Fellows’ stipends. Additionally, we have postponed the kick-off event to August but may be unable to begin recruitment based on American and nation-specific policies. However, we are determined to keep the ball rolling and are working closely with all partners to help pave the way smoothly for continued collaborative development. One thing is for sure, while we are tasked with making a clearer case for community within economics and development, dollars and cents can only tell the story so far. It is people that ultimately create and drive systems, govern them and live within them. The tale of our collective impact journey has reached a new chapter. We have turned a page, and what unfolds will be as we live it.



SPRING REI UPDATE

Jenan Jondy, Project Coordinator REI: CCED

Since 2011, the Michigan State University U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI) has supported over 180 innovative economic development projects in Michigan, spurring high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic innovation. To date, REI projects have had over \$68 million in economic impact in distressed regions of Michigan with 97 Student-Led Faculty Guided technical assistance projects, 69 Co-Learning Plans, and 16 Innovation Fellows.

At the end of September 2024, REI made the call on authors and experts to contribute to the next annual cycle of its work to develop new Co-Learning Plans. These Co-Learning Plans serve as essential resources for local and state economic development practitioners and policymakers, providing guidance as they make decisions that affect Michigan’s distressed communities and regions. Through an annual process of outreach, REI and partners identified seven topics for possible Co-Learning Plans in 2025: Workforce Transition and Economic Adaptation; Fair Share Affordable Housing Linked to State Supported Economic Development; Encouraging Large Companies and Public Institutions to Procure from Local Businesses; Addressing Agricultural Workforce and Infrastructure Shortages through Innovation Centers; Community Economic Impacts and Feasibility of Developing Renewable Energy Sources; Assessing the Capacity of Economic Development Professionals for Community Benefit Plans and Agreements; Assessing Businesses Concerns in Adopting Community Benefit Plans and Agreements; and Other.