



Mixed Blood Theatre: Project 154 Evaluation

Findings from Neighborhood Resident Interviews

About Project 154 and these findings

Project 154 is a narrative health project designed by Mixed Blood Theatre. Throughout 2018, Mixed Blood staff worked with community health leaders to host story circles with residents of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood in Minneapolis and with health care providers who work in the neighborhood. These story circles explored personal and community health. As part of the project, 20 neighborhood residents shared their stories of health as part of a short film series with Mixed Blood. These short films were shown at a community art event hosted by Mixed Blood, called *Luubaan Stories: Stories of Health and Community*. This event also showcased live performances and offered storytelling and narrative health workshops for neighborhood residents and health care providers.

Mixed Blood partnered with Wilder Research to help evaluate Project 154. As part of the evaluation, Wilder interviewed nine neighborhood residents who contributed to the short film series. These interviews gathered residents' perceptions of the story circles and perceptions of sharing their stories via video. This report presents findings from these interviews and connects the findings to Mixed Blood's goal of being a good organizational neighbor.

Findings from interviews with neighborhood residents

Overall, all neighborhood residents who were interviewed thought the story circles were important for addressing health concerns in their community. All neighborhood residents who were interviewed also said that they felt comfortable during the story circles. It should be noted that multiple neighborhood residents said that conversations like those that occurred at the story circles happen informally and regularly in various settings in the neighborhood—and have occurred like this for many years. In other words, Project 154 didn't *start* such community conversations. That being said, a few neighborhood residents said that they hadn't experienced conversations like those that occurred in the story circles before—so for these residents the story circles represented a new way of engaging with their neighbors.

“The most meaningful thing about the gathering was us getting together. It was very meaningful because we're sharing our experiences and what we've gone through. We're learning from one another.”
-Neighborhood resident

“Most of the people in the gathering—we know each other and we see each other at community places like the market or the neighborhood or the mosques. We talk about the health issues and we give advice to each other. That's what happens usually in the community. That wasn't something that started [by the story circle].”
-Neighborhood resident

“The way Mixed Blood is approaching the people and the activities are good. It makes me happy.”
-Neighborhood resident

Project 154 and Mixed Blood's goal of being a good neighbor

In 2018, Wilder Research worked with Mixed Blood staff to develop the “Good Neighbor Framework.” This framework outlines a set of organizational directives for Mixed Blood that, if pursued and tracked over time, will help Mixed Blood accomplish its goal of being a good organizational neighbor within the Cedar-Riverside community. Please see Figure 1 for an overview of this framework.

The interviews with neighborhood residents resulted in findings that primarily align with two aspects of the Good Neighbor Framework highlighted below: *Neighbors connect with each other through Mixed Blood*, and *Neighbors see values in Mixed Blood's work*. The rest of this report is structured to describe how Project 154 contributed to Mixed Blood's goal of being a good organizational neighbor.

1. Mixed Blood Theatre's Good Neighbor Framework

Being a good neighbor looks like...	How will Mixed Blood will know they are being a good neighbor?
A commitment from Mixed Blood to the neighborhood	Mixed Blood staff and board are knowledgeable about the alignment between our work and what our neighbors want and value Mixed Blood's neighborhood engagement work is shared by all staff
Making art with our neighbors	Neighbors are actively involved in Mixed Blood's program decisions, and in designing and delivering Mixed Blood's programming Neighbors seek out Mixed Blood with ideas or for support; Mixed Blood supports neighbors in pursuing their artistic or social goals
Neighbors connect with each other through Mixed Blood	Neighbors meet neighbors they haven't met before and deepen relationships with neighbors they already knew through Mixed Blood Neighbors have a clearer and more nuanced picture of the neighborhood through Mixed Blood
Neighbors see value in Mixed Blood's work	Neighbors have fun or are engaged by Mixed Blood's work, or otherwise see Mixed Blood's work as valuable for them or the neighborhood Participation at Mixed Blood by neighbors increases in terms of new visitors and repeat visitors
Neighbors see Mixed Blood as an integral part of the neighborhood	Neighbors express pride in Mixed Blood being a part of the neighborhood Neighbors see Mixed Blood as a representative or spokesperson for the neighborhood

Neighbors connect with each other through Mixed Blood

Most neighborhood residents that were interviewed (8 of 9) spoke directly about how Project 154 facilitated connections between them and their neighbors. In regard to meeting neighbors or deepening existing relationships with neighbors, most residents interviewed noted that they didn't meet anyone new through the story circles, but that they learned more about the lives and experiences of neighbors they already knew. However, a few residents said that they met neighbors they didn't know prior by attending the story circles.

"Getting together itself was beneficial and sharing our own experience was helpful, too. We learned each other's medical experiences. Although we've met with each other before to talk about health, [the story circle] was more specific and focused on health care. That itself was helpful and useful."
-Neighborhood resident

"The gathering was good because it eliminated isolation every participant had. People came together, sharing their experiences together."
-Neighborhood resident

"I learned just how passionate people are about certain topics. People may not always be as passionate about things as you might think, but when you see someone talking about something and then they get emotional and things start coming out and they share stories. And you see how passionate they are... It makes you sit back and reflect."
-Neighborhood resident

In regard to gaining a more clear or nuanced picture of their neighborhood, residents mentioned learning about commonalities in their personal health stories, such as experiences with doctors and interpreters—representing both positive and negative experiences. In particular, challenges with interpreters seemed like a common experience of many people at the story circles. A few residents mentioned how something they learned in the story circle resulted in a positive health care experience the next time they saw a health care provider.

“There was a person who shared on that day that she had a problem with a health care provider in terms of translation. The clinic provided a person who does not speak the same dialect as her. But we talked and we said make sure next time when you go that you request a person from that area—and then later she said that she did that and did receive a different, better person from the clinic. She told me that our gathering worked out for her, that she actually asked and got a change.”
-Neighborhood resident

“There was a person at the gathering that shared a story about her dad who was hospitalized and ended up being paralyzed. The doctors, instead of treating him well, treated him badly—so that was shared at the gatherings and I learned from it. There was some miscommunication between the health care providers and interpreters. Doctors don’t have enough time to sit down and discuss with you. Those are some of the issues and experiences that I’m taking away from the community gathering.”
-Neighborhood resident

“There are a few things that I learned from the gatherings. Some of the folks shared that getting an appointment for dental or for vision can take a while—so now I know to schedule it ahead of time and not wait until the last minute.”
-Neighborhood resident

“I learned that I am not the only one who has a problem. There are a bunch of people who have the same problem as me.”
-Neighborhood resident

Neighbors see value in Mixed Blood’s work

Most neighborhood residents that were interviewed (7 of 9) spoke directly about the value they saw in Project 154—for them as individuals and for the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood as whole. In regard to having fun at, being engaged by, or otherwise seeing value in Mixed Blood’s work, some residents talked about how the story circles helped residents feel more comfortable talking about personal and community health concerns. Additionally, many residents talked about how the short films represent a way for their stories to be shared with many neighborhood residents.

“There were really some people who don’t feel comfortable standing in front of people sharing their ideas, but today, just sitting here and listening to others was making them more comfortable sharing their issues, which helps our community to be more comfortable to share our issues.”
-Neighborhood resident

“I believe the videos will magnify the information to the community. I want to be an agent of change in the neighborhood through mobilization, education, and more videos. I hope to attend more meetings and community gatherings—it would help me improve my own health as well.”
-Neighborhood resident

“For me, I did this video because I really hope people do see it. If this video and things that we talked about really do reach platforms, I’m really, really, really looking forward to that because it really does need to reach platforms and not just even for us, for other communities and others that might be facing the same problem.” -Neighborhood resident

In regard to Mixed Blood forming relationships with neighborhood residents who have never been to Mixed Blood before and deepening relationships with those who have, a few residents said that they hadn’t interacted with Mixed Blood before, and others said that they wanted to be a part of similar efforts in the future. That being said, these interviews did not provide much additional information about this particular aspect of the Good Neighbor Framework.

“I would love to be part of this type of project in the future. It’s important. Sharing my medical experiences and challenges that I’ve had—it’s helpful. That’s what I believe.” -Neighborhood resident

Summary and moving forward

These interviews clearly depict that Project 154 contributed to Mixed Blood’s goal of being a good neighbor within the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. In addition to providing information about how Project 154 resulted in neighbors connecting with each other and in neighbors seeing value in Mixed Blood’s work, these interviews also provided insight about how Mixed Blood’s efforts to address community health concerns are perceived by neighborhood residents, with one resident commenting, “I’m happy because someone is coming to help solve this problem.” Moving forward, we suggest that Mixed Blood build on the success of Project 154 and continue to use the Good Neighbor Framework to guide learnings from projects that engage neighborhood residents like Project 154.

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