EchoX Testimonials

Every aspect of EchoX—from our online resources to our paid programming for youth—has been constructed out of our co-founders' passionate vision to support our region's ethnic cultural communities and our dedicated staff's desire to create a space that they lacked as youth (and now as young adults). Over the years, reactions from BIPOC and immigrant community members have supported this vision. We've had community members tear up and even start to cry. One high school classroom gave us a standing ovation. In talks with adults, we have heard sighs of relief: "Finally, I see myself here."

It is not surprising, then—with the overwhelming support of community members, young and old—that we have had tech industry experts and university professors eager to volunteer their services and expertise (over 13,000 volunteer hours since 2020) because of what is at stake: digital equity and representation.

The following are selected testimonials from our staff, the community we aim to serve, and professionals interested in our growth and mission that have been chosen to offer as proof of concept:

EchoX Staff

"Along with the strong impact of social media and other online platforms, teens (especially BIPOC teens), place a high value on peer relationships at a time when peers "other" them and spread stereotypical disinformation about their familial cultural backgrounds, foods, and art. As a biracial mother of multi-racial, multi-cultural children, I saw this first-hand. The trauma youth of color experience in high school has an impact on their future emotional and economic health. Where is the outlet? School is not always a comfortable place to express one's identity. And yet these teens are naturally internet savvy, they are creative, they need peer support, and they can teach us to think in new ways. So, we meet them where they already are—online. We provide an online platform to support their ethnic cultural identities while introducing them to best practices in digital literacy within a supportive peer-to-peer environment."
        —**Ann Wright**, *Co-founder and Executive Director*

"Growing up, I loved writing and sharing stories, but I didn't have a lot of access to media that featured mixed-race, mixed-culture stories. In high school, I had to watch our theatre director utilize red and yellow face on my classmates to play Chinese and Native characters in the school musicals. When I tried to write about it at the school newspaper, she accused me of libel and other students pretended 'Indian' at me. Through *Voices* and *DIGITIZE*, I have been given the opportunity to finally create the Story Gathering series, a program that I had always dreamed of, an outlet for teens and other young adults to write and publish their own stories about themselves and their ethnic cultural backgrounds in a space where they can feel supported and encouraged."
        —**Kathryn Lam**, *Communications Director*

"When I was growing up I didn't have a place outside of my home where I could explore my culture. I was the only person at my school who was Native American until my sister

joined me in high school. I found myself having very few resources to learn about and practice my culture in community. The few things that my teachers pointed me towards were history books written by White authors and so I often felt that there was no place for my culture to be a part of my education. It didn't feel safe or even remotely true to who I am or the generations that came before me. EchoX is a place where youth can dive deep into their culture. It's one of the few places I've found to be authentic and generative. I didn't have that growing up, but youth today can thanks to EchoX."

—**Sierra Red Bow**, *Community Outreach Director*

DIGITIZE Youth Council (2019–20, 2020–21)

The *DIGITIZE* Youth Council was a program we held during the 2019–20, 2020–21 school years. We had plans to continue this program but ultimately retired it due to difficulties with the pandemic and the students' extended 'online time' with virtual classes.

"Working with Sierra and EchoX helped me find ways to talk about my other side (Indonesian). It was something I hadn't explored before; I usually had focused on my Black side. It was refreshing to think and talk about my entire identity."

—**Virginia**, *Youth Council Co-President*

"The Youth Council started right before the COVID lockdowns happened. Being a member was helpful during that stressful, unsure time. What I enjoyed most about being on the council was how everyone's voice was always treated with respect regardless of the conversation or who was talking."

—**Jared**, *Youth Council Co-President*

"I learned what it took to make events like workshops happen—staff was supportive in my idea for a web development workshop and pushed me towards making it into a reality. They gave me free rein over what the workshop would be like which motivated me to match my vision of the workshop as close as possible to the actual event. Becoming someone who originally joined workshops to [being someone who] created a workshop deepened my perspective on what it takes to teach others and be part of a team. Currently, I am working towards making a 3D-printing workshop for the engineering workshop at my university. The support I received from EchoX gave me the confidence and knowledge to create these events for any student or youth who are interested in the topics I want to teach."

—**Jacob**, *Youth Council Treasurer*

Program Participants

"Story Gathering: The Workshop" Spring 2023

"I loved the fact that we were able to get together and learn from each other through stories. I was also excited to discover the real history behind my mix of cultures and

write a personal piece about it."
>—**Student Participant**

"What I liked most about the workshop was that we had one-on-one sessions with someone who knew about writing and how to improve and help our pieces of writing."
>—**Student Participant**

"I really liked how this gave us the opportunity to tell one of our own stories- the prompt was very broad and up to our own interpretation which was nice."
>—**Student Participant**

'I really liked the agency and freedom we had… I was glad that I was able to have control over the story that I wanted to tell."
>—**Student Participant**

"How to Look Cool Online: Level 1" Summer 2021, 2022, 2023 Workshops

"Before I joined the workshop, I was too scared to start coding because it seemed daunting. Now I know the basics and plan on learning more!"
>—**Student Participant**

"I thought coding was dull and boring, but there is a creative side as well!"
>—**Student Participant**

"I liked how welcoming and approachable every aspect felt. It was nice to know that every question was a good question and the learning atmosphere felt safe and inclusive."
>—**Student Participant**

"What I liked most about this workshop was the inclusivity and support [it] and EchoX reflects… Every meeting felt very intentional and was made to make participants feel like it was a safe space. I enjoyed the overall experience and it's a great opportunity for BIPOC youth who want to get into coding because it allows for us a chance to learn the basics that will provide a foundation for our future in coding and overall learning."
>—**Student Participant**

"I found this workshop to be diverse, inclusive, and welcoming. I liked how everyone came from both different tech-experience backgrounds as well as heritage backgrounds and that people were understanding of the different experiences we had gone through."
>—**Student Participant**

"There aren't many workshops like 'How to Look Cool Online' that provide BIPOC youth a chance to learn fundamental skills in coding. Everyone involved wants the best for the participants and it shows because during those 3 weeks they were all open to helping us if we needed without any judgement which I appreciated."
>—**Student Participant**

"The most important lesson I will take away after participating in this workshop is that it isn't about what I finished with, but the experience in learning new coding languages that will ultimately help me with future projects as I continue to work on my skills. In the

end, it's about the process and my growth over the few weeks rather than my outcome.
　　—**Student Participant**

"When I think about expressing myself online, I think about posting on social media, but I've never considered creating a whole website for it. It's cool to be able to build your own platform."
　　—**Student Participant**

"How to Look Cool Online: Level 2" 2021–22 School Year Pilot Program

The following quotes and screenshots are from one student who took part in the 2021 Summer Level 1 Workshop then continued to work with us during the following school year.

"I found EchoX when I saw an offer to teach me to make a web presence. I really liked it because instead of a template, it felt like starting with a sheet of blank paper. It felt like a whole new world was opening up. My vision didn't feel limited by how little I knew though, because [EchoX staff] offered me tips and spent time working with me so that I could publish stories the way I imagined them."
　　—**Brendan**, *Student Participant*

"I was nervous to start conversations with my grandparents about our history, but I really wanted to. [Staff routinely checked in with me] at our weekly zoom calls to make plans, so I went into the conversations knowing I had their support. I don't think I would have done this if it weren't for their support!
　　—**Brendan**, *Student Participant*

"The museum site I made [is] a museum of dreams. The main exhibit is a narrative of an ancestor, Grandpa Kesamaru, describing my family's history of migration from Japan and how they navigated racial injustice, fire, and community."
　　—**Brendan**, *Student Participant*

Program Instructors

"Story Gathering: The Workshop" Spring 2023

"All the students in this program were so thoughtful and thorough. Each of them had an amazing story to tell and I was impressed by their initiative and introspection as they worked to complete their stories. Being able to talk with them about why they signed up and why they wanted to tell the stories they had chosen really emphasized to me the need for more programs like this.
　　—**Kathryn Lam**, *Communications Director*

"How to Look Cool Online: Level 1" Summer 2021 and 2022 Workshops

"The young students who participated in this program were curious, creative, and enthusiastic. They produced websites that reflected their identities, passions, and social concerns. This workshop and the students' final projects were unique because they

avoided the cookie-cutter templates that most website platforms offer today. Instead, the students designed and created their websites from the ground up... What these students accomplished in two weeks was nothing less than impressive!"

—**Aaron Ottinger**, *(former) Seattle University Professor, DICE (Digital Culture and Technology)*

"They all had a niche that felt very personal to each of the website's creators. There's a lot more they can build on and that's kind of what I was hoping for when they made their websites—something that they can continue to tinker on past the workshop!"

—**Jacob**, *Youth Council Treasurer*

Professionals

"EchoX's vision reminds me of what I yearned for as a child—nuanced stories about people straddling cultures and identities told through people with lived knowledge. I volunteer because I want to see that vision become real and because I admire the dedication of a small but mighty staff!"

—**Kamna Shastri**, *Community Outreach Coordinator at KUOW*

"Directories such as what EchoX is curating are invaluable resources. They have created a platform that connects individuals with a wide variety of services and organizational information not [aggregated] in other places. It's a very special place to share information and ideas."

—**Aaron Morgan**, *Manager of Access Services at Seattle University's Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons*

"Take ALL my headlines!"

— **Assunta Ng**, *Publisher of* NW Asian Weekly

"While I love the youth component of DIGITIZE, I am excited for the entire resource to be available. When you are ready, I will send this out to all principals, librarians, faculty, and counselors, K-12, district-wide."

—**Dr. Jen Rose**, *Director of Teaching and Learning of Lake WA School District*

"Talk about subsidiarity—the Voices section is rich with personal narratives from a wide range of voices and experiences. The directory section is also helpful. This work is helpful and necessary. I am looking forward to utilizing this website as a resource. I think it could be cool to have students utilize this for coursework and projects—the wheels are turning."

—**Sofia Lopez Bactol**, *Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Theology Instructor at Bishop Blanchet High School*

"The EchoX directory helped us find organizations that we had not come across before. We appreciate all the work they put into making this a true community resource!"

—**Sudeshna Dixit**, *Director of Cultural Connections at EastHub*