



Building an Inclusive Environmental Movement Through Environmental Justice & Environmental Education

Portland, Oregon

February 2018



We would like to thank the following organizations for their leadership on this project:



This project was made possible with generous support from our sponsors:



A note from our project management team:

We are delighted that you are taking the time to read through this report. Whether you are an environmental educator, environmental justice advocate, government agency representative, philanthropist or community partner, we hope that this glimpse into our project offers you guidance for building more authentic relationships, deeper analysis and ideas for ways to make your programs, practices and ultimately our communities more just and livable for all.

This project is part of a broader movement toward justice that began before our work together and will continue with our collective commitment toward liberation from historically oppressive paradigms. If you are new to this work or to the language, concepts and ideas presented in this report, pay attention to how you feel, react and respond to what you read. We ask that you keep an open mind and engage your curiosity. Ask questions that you can explore on your own and with your colleagues and peers. We have included a glossary as part of the appendix to assist you in learning and growing.

Because this was a co-created process we wanted to honor the voices, direction and leadership provided by our project partners. You will notice a change in voice, structure and style as you read through this report. This is intentional. We worked to strike a balance between process and product in our work together and felt that it would have been a contradiction to standardize how the information is presented. If this format does not work for you, ask yourself why? Where do the rules for the ways we construct and share information come from?

This report has three parts:

- Executive Summary
- Report
- Appendix

All documents can be found at www.eeao.org.

This is not a roadmap or checklist but a collection of recommendations and opportunities focused on building relationships across difference and a shared analysis to advance diversity, equity and inclusion. Find the recommendations that resonate with or challenge you to do something different, support what you're currently working on or toward, and/or to integrate into your personal and professional lives.

We offer deep gratitude to our partners, funders, families, friends, and to YOU – for finding the courage to work together to create a new paradigm where we all thrive.

Queta González

Cary Watters

Traci Price

Center for Diversity and
the Environment

Native American Youth
and Family Center

Environmental Education
Association of Oregon

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- **Bridging Divisions Related to Race** – Overcoming structural, historical, personal and behavioral issues related to relations between communities of color and white-dominated institutions and organizations.
- **Working With Language, Culture, and Logistics** – Improving cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness and overcoming language and logistical barriers when working across community and organizational boundaries.

The primary EECapacity recommendation is that **in order to be effective, environmental education must be integrated within and led by communities** (i.e. geographically defined communities, communities of color, low-income communities, culturally specific, etc.) **and community-based organizations**. This can be achieved by recognizing how community-based groups are already doing environmental education, by building capacity within those organizations to continue creating and delivering their own programs and by building strong partnerships between environmental education providers and community-based organizations. These approaches place environmental education providers primarily in a supportive role, emphasizing ongoing relationships with self-determining communities, with many of the lead roles in program design and delivery fulfilled by community members.

In response to EECapacity findings, EEAO secured funding from Metro Regional Government in 2015 to co-lead the regional project described in this report with the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) and Center for Diversity and the Environment (CDE) to develop and implement an inclusive regional environmental education leadership model representing a diverse cross-sector of individuals and organizations working together to build a healthy, just, and thriving Portland Metropolitan region. EEAO also partnered with CDE to secure additional support for CDE to host two leadership programs to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in environmental education.

Why Build Inclusive Environmental Education?

This project has worked to address how the mainstream environmental movement has excluded voices, perspectives and leadership from communities of color and low-income. Recent studies¹ confirm how marginalized or historically under-resourced communities continue to be locked out of the mainstream movement. In staffing, training, and outreach, environmental organizations have a “green ceiling” limiting the participation of communities of color, low-income, LGBTQ and other populations.

As exclusionary practices and impacts continue, our demographics are shifting. Communities of color have nearly tripled their population across the Portland-Metropolitan region since 1980, rising from barely 3% in 1960 to almost 26% in 2010. We also have the ninth largest urban population of Native Americans. Despite our region’s increasing diversity, high school graduation rates are significantly lower for Black, Latino and Native American students and Blacks and Hispanics earn less than two-thirds of whites.² The Coalition of Communities of Color released a series of reports in 2010 that profile communities of color and whites in Multnomah County and

¹ Green 2.0 “The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies,” <https://www.diversegreen.org>

² <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/you-are-here-snapshot-portland-regions-changing-communities>

found significant disparities in education, occupation, income levels and poverty rates, unemployment and housing.³ Their findings underscore how People of Color experience overwhelming hardship and face severe social and economic exclusion.

Beyond Portland, every county in Oregon, except Harney and Wheeler, has increasing populations of communities of color. Deschutes and Gilliam counties experienced more than a 150% increase in Latino or Hispanic populations since 2000.⁴ Public school demographics are shifting more quickly with 36% minority youth compared to roughly 17% of Oregon’s adult minority population.⁵ Oregon is expected to be a minority-majority state by the year 2060.⁶ Additionally, 16.6% of Oregonians live in poverty with greater impacts to rural communities. More than one out of five Oregonians are on food stamps and Medicaid dependence has increased 25% over the last ten years.⁷ As our state becomes more diverse, we must ensure fair treatment and opportunities for prosperity and health for all. As our communities evolve, environmental education must evolve with them.

Working across racial, ethnic, economic and other differences is complex and difficult. Our ability to work together hinges on the depth of our personal relationships and can be strengthened by the degree to which we understand historic and institutional privileges and oppressions. We are not only building a bridge between historically divided communities but in the words of one of our regional project leaders, “we are constructing a boat that we can float down the river together.”

We initially grounded our work in “why” this project mattered to each of our project team leads (EEO, NAYA, CDE), in light of and in spite of the systems that impact our communities. Understanding our personal “why” helped us build connection and group cohesion while setting a strong foundation for guiding this project forward with a sense of unity among extended partners. We were specifically interested in addressing root causes and current impacts of the divide between our communities or more specifically that:



If we want to build inclusive environmental education and ultimately a more inclusive environmental movement, we must tend to specific needs of diverse communities, elevate voices and leaders that have been excluded, build strong allies, and find the courage to work together to create a new paradigm where we all thrive.

³ <http://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/cc-c-data-research/>

⁴ https://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.prc/files/FULLSIZE_LATINO_CHANGE.jpg

⁵ Oregon Department of Education - <http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0067Select2.asp>

⁶ “States of Change, The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate,” <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SOC-report1.pdf>

⁷ A Picture of Poverty in Oregon, <https://projects.oregonlive.com/maps/poverty/>

Theory of Change – Relational Worldview

Theory of Change

Changing our course from environmental destruction toward a planet where we all can thrive requires the inclusion of all people and perspectives, diverse leadership and the courage to create a new paradigm.



*“Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. **Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community.**”*
– bell hooks

NAYA brought the relational worldview model to our project. The following description of the relational worldview was originally written by Terry Cross, enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians and founder of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) (1997 May/June issue of Pathways Practice Digest, volume 12, No.4 <https://issuu.com/nicwa>):

“The relational worldview model was developed by NICWA in the 1980's and continues to be refined in practice by NICWA staff. It is a reflection of the Native thought process and concept of balance as the basis for health and wellbeing. “Worldview” is a term used to describe the collective thought process of a people or culture. Thoughts and ideas are organized into concepts. Concepts are organized into constructs and paradigms. Paradigms link together to create worldviews. On our globe today, there are two predominant worldviews—linear and relational. The linear worldview is rooted in European and mainstream American thought. It is very temporal, and it is firmly rooted in the logic that says cause has to come before effect. In contrast, the relational worldview sees life as harmonious relationships where health is achieved by maintaining balance between the many interrelating factors in one’s circle of life. The relational worldview, sometimes called the cyclical worldview, finds its roots in tribal cultures. It is intuitive, non-time oriented and fluid. The balance and harmony in relationships between multiple variables, including spiritual forces, make up the core of the thought system. Every event is understood in relation to all other events regardless of time, space, or physical existence.”⁸

We adopted the relational worldview model, led by NAYA, to center our project on relationships and interconnection. And to support our desired outcomes including:

- Develop a shared regional vision for environmental education
- Secure commitment from all partners to implement recommendations
- Follow leaders of color and low-income in environmental education
- Encourage mainstream organizations to commit to inclusivity
- Resource people of color and low-income adequately for this work

⁸ National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) 1997 May/June issue of Pathways Practice Digest, volume 12, No.4 <https://issuu.com/nicwa>

Project Partners

Our project management team (EEAO, NAYA, CDE) began working together in early 2015. We grounded our project in “why” this work matters (see “Why Build Inclusive Environmental Education”). We then conducted an “ecosystem” analysis of environmental education (broadly defined - networks, coalitions, leadership development programs, and mainstream and culturally specific groups were all named) in Portland and identified and engaged twenty-five partners from community-based organizations who specifically serve low-income and communities of color and from mainstream environmental organizations. The majority of partners were alumni of CDE’s leadership program where they benefited from a deep dive into understanding equity, diversity and inclusion including an analysis of the history, systems and institutions that explain and perpetuate the inequities we see in the environmental movement today. Our full project team included the following partners:



Leadership Team Fishbowl Activity

Project Management

Cary Watters, Native American Youth & Family Center
Traci Price, Environmental Education Association of Oregon
Queta González, Center for Diversity and the Environment

Evaluation & Analysis

Jenny de la Hoz, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Pam Phan, Design & Culture Lab

Leadership Group

Rose High Bear, Wisdom of the Elders
Huy Ong, OPAL Environmental Justice
Gladys Ruiz, Portland Audubon - TALON Program*
Khanh Pham, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
Christine and Clifton Bruno, National Indian Parent Information Center
Edward Hill, Groundwork Portland*
Rob Nathan, Environmental Professionals of Color*
Jessica Lee, Coalition for Communities of Color - Bridges Leadership Program*
Jeri Jimenez, Consultant
Sprina Brown, Camp ELSO
Nestor Campos, Verde



Eco-system Analysis

Ally Group

Elizabeth Start, School and Community Reuse Action Project (SCRAP)

Dan Prince, Multnomah Education Service District Outdoor School*

Kim Smith, Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN)

Kristen Harrison, Portland Metro STEM Partnership

Gabe Sheoships, Friends of Tryon Creek

Gaylen Beatty, Metro/ Adult Conservation Educators NW

Lara Jones, Confluence Environmental Center

Isabel LaCourse, Portland Parks & Recreation

Sheilagh Diez, Metro Regional Government

Kim Strassburg, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Alison Heimowitz, Oregon Zoo & Environmental Education Association of Oregon

Lauren Gottfredson, The Intertwine Alliance

We specifically invited individuals and organizations that are leading and engaged with a number of networks including but not limited to:

- **Coalition of Communities of Color's Bridges Leadership Program** – a comprehensive leadership development initiative driven by the Coalition's values of honoring culturally-specificity while also building a multicultural movement for collective action. Bridges works with 6 culturally specific communities through the Portland African American Leadership Forum, IRCO, Africa House, Unidos for Oregon, and NAYA (led by our regional project co-lead Cary Watters).
- **Adult Conservation Educators NW** – a collaboration of over 25 Portland-based environmental organizations working strategically to cultivate adult land stewards for protecting human health, habitat and clean water.
- **Youth Mentoring Collaborative** – over 50 diverse Portland-Metro partners working through collective impact to provide clear pathways for the next generation of leaders in environmental education and conservation.
- **Portland-Metro STEM Partnership** – over 50 public and private organizations with a shared goal of transforming science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education for K-12 students. Leading regional and statewide initiatives.
- **Oregon Environmental Literacy Program** – housed by Oregon State University Extension, statewide framework, policy, partnerships and program to connect all Oregon youth to their home community and environment.
- **Outdoor School for All** – political campaign to give every Oregon fifth or sixth grader a hands-on week of science- based, outdoor education by securing a permanent, stable source of funding for Outdoor School.
- **Showing Up for Racial Justice** – organizing white people locally and nationally for racial justice.
- **GPSEN** – multi-sector network of educators, students, non-profits, political and industry leaders, organizations, and community members that support formal, non-formal and informal sustainability education efforts. GPSEN is recognized by the United Nations and networked with 146 worldwide collaborations.
- **The Intertwine Alliance** – coalition of 150+ public, private and nonprofit organizations working to integrate nature more deeply into the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan region.

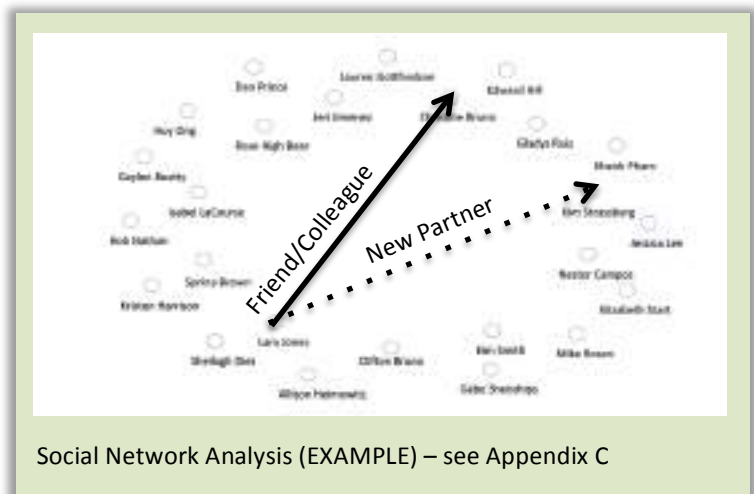
*Indicates that they are no longer with this organization or program, or organizational status may have changed

Leadership and Ally Teams

Our project structure was modeled after the Transportation Justice Alliance (and similar to OPAL’s newly launched Climate Justice Alliance) in that our twenty-five organizational partners were recruited (see Appendix C) as “leadership” and “ally” members. Leadership members primarily serve low-income and communities of color and were paid to lead our collaboratively designed process to ensure our outcomes support community priorities. Ally members represent mainstream environmental organizations and were in a support role. This structure shifted our paradigm away from mainstream white middle-class leadership to leadership by diverse communities with a more holistic understanding of their community’s needs.

Another essential component of this project is that more than half of our partners are CDE Environment 2042 (E42) alumni, including EEAO and NAYA co-leads. They benefited from a deep dive into racial equity work and are more able to recognize, question and interrupt oppressive dominant culture attitudes, behaviors and actions. E42 is CDE’s most impactful program and builds a close-knit cohort of peers and colleagues who support and challenge each other through a uniquely transformative learning process. Cohort members are diversity change agents who are committed to catalyzing real change in their spheres of influence, including our regional project. They are the ambassadors of a new paradigm, ensuring the evolution of a more diverse, equitable, inclusive and thereby relevant environmental movement. CDE’s work continues to show that advanced cultural competence and deep awareness and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion work on an individual level are foundational for effective change on broader levels and crucial to cope with deep demographic and cultural shifts. We cannot overemphasize the importance of relationship building across difference that occurs during E42, something we know impacted the success of our project.

One focus for our meetings was relationship building within and across our Leadership & Ally Groups. We were pleased to have Jenny de la Hoz, US Fish & Wildlife Service, join us as an in-kind evaluator to track our progress with specific focus on social network analysis of our group. We believe that our group is a microcosm of our region. If we can demonstrate that through deliberate efforts to build relationships across difference that the individuals in our project begin working together to address shared community priorities, then our process may have implications for building a more inclusive Portland-Metro region where everyone is equitably invested in creating a more livable and just future for all. Jenny evaluated a pre and post social network analysis from all program participants to determine what, if any, relationships were forged during our project process. We anticipated seeing new active partnerships emerge because of existing evidence of the impacts of our efforts in prior years.



Project Process

Project partners worked together since early 2016 through a series of meetings and retreats to **co-develop a regional vision to ensure that environmental education is couched within environmental justice, explicitly anti-racist, and affirms the diverse strengths and needs of communities of color and low-income, ultimately strengthening our region as a whole.** We initiated meetings with our leadership team members first, so they could get to know each other and discuss best next steps in our co-created process. Because many of our leadership team members work in environmental justice, we began referring to our project as the **“Environmental Justice/Environmental Education (EJ/EE) Regional Project.”** Leadership team members co-created the following agreements for their work together:

- Openly talk about opportunities
- Create safe space where mistakes can be made
- Share perspectives
- All voices are special, powerful, spiritual
- Approach each other with fresh new eyes
- Open dialogue

They also decided on some questions and ideas to explore:

- Be clear on who is benefitting
- Explore UN declaration on rights of Indigenous People
- Power shifting/sharing
- What is equity?
- What is the impact of current practices?
- What have ally groups been challenged by in creating equitable spaces?
- Partnerships/\$/recruit/internal
- Internal and external practices
- Earth based people
- Perceived constraints to moving work forward

We held a separate kickoff meeting with our ally team members before bringing our whole group together. Ally partners discussed how they wanted to actively shift the paradigm and work with the leadership group and created the following list of priorities:

- Listen
- Recognize self-empowerment & expertise of leadership group members
- Sit back and learn
- Be open and authentic
- Recognize that you don't have to start with your organizational mission - bring your whole self
- Be humble, practice humility
- Know how to be an ally
- Ask leadership team what they need
- Defer your own/organizational opinions to listen to leadership group voices
- Focus on building relationships
- Be able to hear that you may be doing things wrong and be okay with that; resist the urge to defend or deflect

Before any of our meetings, we surveyed project partners to find out more about the need to change the mainstream or conventional practice of environmental education. Some of their thoughts include (see Appendix D):

There are so many racial, cultural, ethnic perspectives that aren't represented when we cling to the traditional format of environmental education.

Environmental education has the potential to carve out space for people to discover their own connection to place. If the way these opportunities are framed are from one view point with a narrow definition of "nature", "environment", and how to facilitate these opportunities, we miss the chance to allow individuals from a broad variety of cultures and lived experiences to grow their own relationship with the environment.

If we fail to change the paradigm, we perpetuate a system that supports a dominant culture worldview, marginalizes people and communities, and will ultimately fail to respond to the challenges our communities face related to environment, economy, equity, and opportunity.

Our project team members covered lots of ground in their meetings from framing how they want to work together to identifying barriers faced by mainstream organizations to be more inclusive. Leadership group members also created and explored outreach questions with their communities (Appendix E).

Pam Phan from Design & Culture Lab conducted extended interviews (see Appendix F for interview guide) with each of our leadership team members to understand more about what our partners wanted to see in our developing “**Shared Analysis**” (see Appendix G), how partners might work together cohesively, without duplicating efforts, and how to effectively work across differences in community experiences, especially those between ally groups and communities of color. All interviews lasted about one hour and were transcribed by Pam. Our project management team (Cary, Queta and Traci) met with Jenny de la Hoz to seek ideas for analyzing the transcriptions. Jenny suggested that we review the transcripts and search for key words or ideas. We reviewed the transcripts for common themes and created a “code book” (see Appendix H) to track and analyze all the information. What emerged were the following three themes (see Appendix I):



Power – equity and justice
People – culture and relationships
Profession – leadership and workforce development

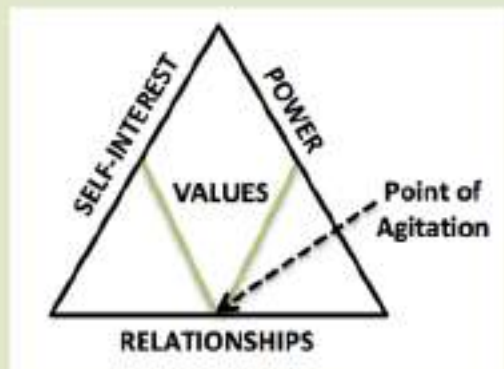
These three themes formed into our 2017 work groups. Members from leadership and ally teams self selected to participate in one of the groups. The following sections are summaries from each work group’s meetings, discussions and recommendations in their own voice.

WORK GROUP: Power

Process Overview

The Power work group's process itself was an experiment in distribution of power. The most apparent lesson learned involves shared analysis of what it means to have a leader. In dominant society, power is often abused through leadership roles. Therefore, the group sought an egalitarian structure in direct opposition to singular leadership, with various roles designated but not maintained over time. For a period of time, this left the group in a disorganized space. Work group contributors experienced lack of capacity. Some staff turnover took place within individual organizations, which further exacerbated existing challenges. Ultimately, the group recognized the value in having a lead coordinator to keep track of all moving pieces, which took place in the final phases of this process.

Members of the Power work group met throughout the year. OPAL's primary role involved staff contribution of a presentation to the EJ/EE full group in a May training on Environmental Justice 101 and power analysis using the Values Triangle as an activity of the Power group. This training, which shared on the history of environmental justice and the Just Transition Strategic Framework, contributed to the full group's understanding on how to frame environmental education, environmental justice, and ecological justice and how to conduct a power analysis.



Values Triangle: a way to look at building a power.
Every person, organization and issue has one.
Understanding this triangle is key to creating change.

HOW THE VALUES TRIANGLE WORKS. Start with a point of agitation to bring someone clarity - shake them free of the "dirt" of corruption, cynicism, helplessness, fear, ignorance, hatred, oppression or confusion that keeps them from forming relationships, clearly seeing their self-interest and those of others, and from having the power to act on their values. Agitation is done in relationship and is about challenging without belittling, growing people into powerful advocates, activists, leaders and organizers. Agitate people around their values and remind them that those values should shape their self-interest, power and relationships.

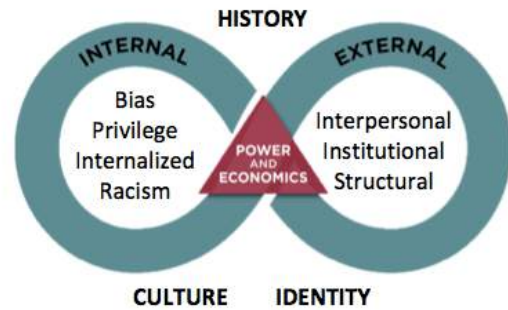
<https://www.afscme.org/document/2015-next-wave-workshop-resources/Handout-Values-Triangle.pdf>

Why Power Matters

Power, in light of our dominant society's worldview of white supremacy, colonization and consumerism, is toxic to everybody, but is not inherently bad. Those directly impacted by oppression and disparities experience decreased health and wellbeing. When oppressed groups' voices are suppressed, we lose out as a whole on the depth and breadth of our diverse communities' creativity. Fields like environmental education are put in a box, whereas it is in fact a large field with many diverse approaches outside of its conventionally recognized realms of science and outdoor education in the natural world. The root word "eco" literally means home; "ecology" means knowledge of home and "economy" means management of home. This is all encompassing both of the natural world and the built environment.

Caution must be taken when using the nuanced word, 'privilege'. Privilege in a toxic system, at its core, is not a good thing. Power can be exerted on people as oppression. If someone has privilege it can be leveraged as a power. We have privileges we cannot control. It's not necessarily bad to have those but if we exert them over others that is when they become oppressed.

Change at all scales is challenging because people are afraid of losing something. It can be scary for those with power because they are used to the dominant mentality of a zero sum game, i.e. one person's gain can only happen through another's loss. A new paradigm is not about reversing dominant power structures by the oppressed becoming the oppressors. Through implementation of a new paradigm, we can expand the pie rather than fight over crumbs. If we shift resources, shift power and change the game we can produce a society that defines success as social and ecological well being as opposed to concentration of wealth and power. A false dichotomy that arose within the discussion of scales of change involves organizational change being more important than personal change. Institutional assessment is an easy place for dominant culture to start, but individual change is important in conjunction with organizational change. One must understand their own context and reflect internally first before looking outward. This is not an 'either/or' situation, but rather 'both/and'. Both are necessary to achieve the larger goal of change at a societal scale.



Understanding the system of racial inequity – world-trust.org

Environmental Education within Just Transition Framework

A major push in environmental education is the idea that we are trying to change behaviors. If you hear a tragic story a person may interject and say they know how to solve the problem. It's not about the listener at all but rather the speaker. It dovetails into empathetic listening. Empathy is not about the receiver but the person doing the speaking. They know what is needed. This flips environmental education on its head. We hear stats like 'this many people gave \$1.6 million to environmental education' but if it wasn't contributed to address root causes of problems we haven't accomplished anything.

What are the root causes?

- Extractive economy as a whole
- Exploitation of people
- Degradation of the natural world
- Capitalism and white male supremacy



Current State of Funding

There is a lack of funding for capacity building in environmental education. The dominant or mainstream practice of environmental education can be at odds with the interests of funders like timber companies that results in a limited perspective of environmental education. Many funders are interested in supporting direct service but not necessarily shifting the long-term paradigm. Nothing is simple – funders oftentimes want to fund programs rather than administrative or operational costs. This is even more true for small organizations that don't have trust built with funders. “What are the outcomes? What are the outputs?” Funders who place caps on administrative fees force us to split hairs on how much we're spending on IT, etc.

Teaching communities of color how to access a dominant culture system goes back to power. Funding of white groups to do equity work is great at getting white people and groups to think about equity, but how much funding actually goes to communities of color in this paradigm? There is a risk of equity washing. There is an opportunity to ask potential grantees to discuss their historical commitment to equity and how they fit into the just transition strategic framework. Don't chase funding if it doesn't fit your mission.

An Intertwine Alliance study from 2011 identified more than 400 mainstream environmental education organizations in the Portland Metropolitan Area (see Appendix K). Many are small nonprofits all fighting for a very limited pot of money. This estimation does not include all the community based and culturally specific communities doing “environmental education” and not self-identifying as environmental educators. The question to ask is whether we need all these providers and if so, how do we stop individualistic approaches so we can work together collectively and more effectively? What are each of our strengths and how can we bring them to the collective to leverage real change? It costs more to start your own organization rather than joining forces with another organization as fiscal sponsor. What if all “environmental education” professionals came together with one administrative body like a communal nonprofit governance? Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board tried a similar model with watershed councils and funded Cascade Pacific to be the fiscal agent of watershed councils. In Arizona they worked with local tribes and came up with a statewide plan that is integrated. We must address the stigma of fiscal sponsorship in order to create more equitable access to resources and leverage our collective ability to create change.

Recommendations

- Encourage fiscal sponsorship
- Eliminate false dichotomies, e.g. individual AND organizational work
- Develop awareness of power dynamics through analyses like the Values Triangle
- View environmental education through just transition strategic framework



WORK GROUP: People

The People work group brainstormed aspects of how to define environmental education and within the context of their theme identified the following characteristics as important:

- Promote respect and balance between nature, people and knowledge
- Connection
- Habitats
- Nature
- Infinite possibility of all the systems that keep us alive - ecosystems
- Our future planets



This brainstorm led to thinking about what, how and who they want to see engaged in and leading the field. Their vision stemmed from projects and programs work group members are involved in within their organizations. They reflected on a person, or set of organizations with whom they developed **new partnerships** with and asked the following questions:

When did the connection begin?

Who was it with?

How did it evolve?

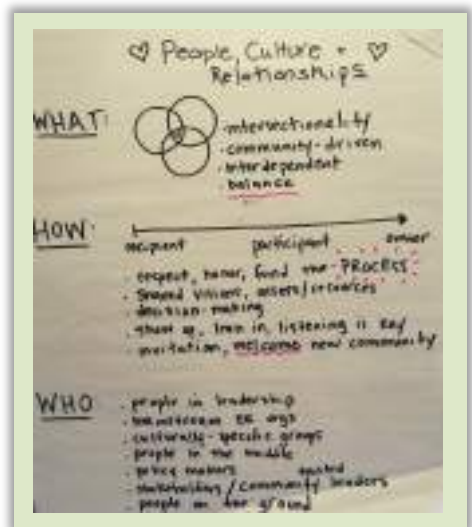
What are the significant milestones?

Who did it serve?

Why does this matter?

Building off *why it matters*, they developed **recommendations** about why building culturally, ethnically and racially diverse relationships is so critical in this work. Here are their stories in their own words...

CLIFTON BRUNO – [NATIVE AMERICAN PARENT INFORMATION CENTER \(NIPIC\)](#)



If not for the partnerships, the *Quest into Nature* program would not have been nearly as meaningful. NIPIC was awarded a City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services watershed grant in the amount of \$7,000. Johnson Creek Watershed Council (JCWC) helped write the original grant and provided advice to streamline the program model. Later, they became the fiscal sponsor and insurance agent. They also helped with designing flyers and outreach. Additional partners included Portland Parks and Recreation (PPR) and Portland State University.

JCWC and PPR had the tools and storage that NIPIC did not have. PPR provided and delivered native plants while NIPIC purchased culturally specific plants – they shared the costs. PPR also provides gloves and ponchos...they even had youth sizes for families with children.

Good partnership, will try some new approaches:

- Offer program 2 times, one weekend and one during week to appeal to youth programs during week (NARA hopefully).
- Broaden outreach. Originally families with kids with special needs....target community that often don't get to go to outdoor school and field trips.
- Want to create a model of serving - reasons that these have been funded.
- Expand beyond the target audience to include others....adults with special needs, additional families, increase participation but with balance.
- Approached by US Fish & Wildlife Service (Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge) with available transportation funds and went to refuge....Chemawa Indian School drew three Siletz programs, plus some from Christine's group, and NARA youth program. Siletz brought lunches for everyone (about 100). Gathered nettles on the refuge. Appreciated the flexibility with the funds due to canceling and (when possible) rescheduling.
- Paid stipends through a Regional Arts and Culture Council grant to have helpers at events. Flexibility was great to accommodate the fire closures.

Recommendations: Be **flexible**. Let go of expectations that don't make sense anymore. A good example of this is using transportation funds in a variety of ways - not just for vehicle rental. Consider the identified barrier for involvement and work to surmount them. Offer a variety of transportation options such as. bus passes, prepaid gas cards, mileage reimbursement etc). Be comfortable (actually, anticipate) that there will be many situations/changing conditions that may require flexibility.

NESTOR CAMPOS – [VERDE](#)

Over the years, Nestor has built deep and meaningful relationships with “mainstream environmental” nonprofits such as Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Habitat for Humanity and Audubon Society of Portland. With these relationships in place, Nestor was able to develop Verde's Rain Garden program in partnership with these and other groups. This community-centered program, now entering its fourth year, will explore native plants, stormwater management, ecological education, culturally relevant traditions, and in doing so, will beautify six homes in NE Portland neighborhoods. 10 students from the neighborhood school will get to participate in each installation and will gain ecological justice education and potential career pathways. There will be opportunities for further education and involvement once the project is complete. Very exciting! <https://prezi.com/yjt7gjwtfd-qw/copy-of-rain-gardens-at-cully/>

Recommendation: This collaboration is the direct result of patience, listening, showing up, and respecting the process. Balance is at the heart of this work.

SHEILAGH DIEZ - [METRO](#)

I have had the honor of coordinating a collection of partnerships between culturally-specific organizations serving communities of color and Metro Parks and Nature teams. This approach grew out of recommendations from community leaders who stated that Metro current processes did not meet the needs of their communities. The first partnership began at the very end of 2013 and we now collaborate with about seven different organizations through formal, funded partnerships. Current partners include: **Latino Network, ROSE CDC (not cso), Sista**

Sistah, Unite Oregon, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Self Enhancement, Inc., and Centro Cultural. There several additional organizations with whom we are collaborating in smaller ways as well.

Each partnership has evolved in its own way. As a government agency, it has been important to be able to offer funding in a flexible manner that prioritizes relationship-building and cross-organizational understanding. Each year that we work with a partner, we seem to be unveiling a new aspect of how we can learn together and approach our work. It has been important to be patient and give time to each relationship so that they can evolve.

Each partnership has a collection of moments where the degree of deepening trust becomes tangible. A colleague telling me that after three years of partnership, she now feels comfortable recommending that a colleague consider applying for a position at Metro. Seeing youth from one of our partnerships apply for and get into a paid internship program at Metro. Hearing a long term colleague give an overview of Metro and our partnership to participants in the leadership program he coordinates. Or yesterday, as a partner called out parks and nature as one of the core functions of government. For me the deepest impact has been the depth of relationships that I am able to participate in and the honest conversations that we have about how we can shift government function to better meet the needs of our community.

Internally, there have also been milestones in dedicated funding, new invoicing and contracting procedures, and increased interest in and utilization of partnerships as a way we do our work.

Our hope for these relationships is that they are **mutually beneficial**. I have observed the impact that working closely with community has on our staff and the gradual shift in Metro processes and policies. For our partners, I can offer the quantitative data, this many youth, this many emerging leaders have experienced nature in a new way, but I am very interested in learning how to capture and gauge the deeper, more personal impacts of these partnerships and how we can continue to evolve them. I hope to be entering into an evaluative phase in the next couple of months.

As a government parks and nature department, we manage a vast array of spaces on behalf of the entire community. We also have the resources to provide a variety of programming and services for our community. It is our responsibility to work with community to manage these spaces and provide these services in way that resonates with our whole community, not just those members who have had the privilege to influence decisions and directions in the past.

Recommendation: My hope is that through relationship building and by acting on what we hear from our partners we can slowly **rebuild the trust** necessary to be truly inclusive in our work. On a personal note, it is the relationship that I have with partners that feed me, keep me laughing, and ground me in the real work that needs to be done.

LARA JONES – [CONFLUENCE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER](#)

In 2011, when Confluence launched the AmeriCorps program, Diego Gioseffi, a member of the King Neighborhood Association and leader of the [Green King](#) project came to our office. He had

learned about our program online and was very interested to see if our team of Members could support the greening of the King Elementary School and the surrounding neighborhoods. We were delighted to meet with him to support his work.

Over the past 6 years, Confluence has deepened our relationship with Diego in the following ways:

- Organized 3 service projects at King Elementary School (Member Orientation, MLK Day, a Team Meeting);
- Contracted with Diego to share his fundraising stories to our Members who were interested in grant writing and fund development;
- Connected Members to Diego to support his ongoing effort to make King communities greener, safer, and more sustainable;
- Selected Green King to be a project partner in our third year of Fellows Programming;
- Hired and placed Stephanie Sanchez, Confluence Fellow, at the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhood (NECN) to serve Green King for 11 consecutive months, and
- Supported Good in the Hood after it was targeted by white supremacists

The partnership has served many people, but the primary beneficiaries have been communities of color in the NE King Neighborhood and Diego. The ripple included the staff and faculty at King School, various Confluence Members and Fellows learning about environmental justice education, the children, youth and families in the NE King neighborhood, Confluence staff/board, Green King project partners and members of NECN.

This partnership matters because collaboration and building community are at the heart of justice work. Without diverse partnerships like this, the “environmental movement” will remain dominated by the elite and inaccessible to half of the US population. Without partnerships like this, environmental work will lack depth, breadth, culture/tradition, relevancy and longevity.

Recommendations: Make time to learn how to respectfully engage across differences. Show up, listen, practice humility, discover personal biases, tend to impact, learn about our county’s **true** history, understand the deep value of human diversity, and continually work to create programming that puts equity in the center.

KIM STRASSBURG – [TUALATIN RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE](#)

I first met Wil Warren, CEO of **I’m Hooked, Inc**, in 2015. Wil learned about the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and our Urban Refuge Program through his contacts within the local fishing community. He gave me a call, shared a bit of his dedication and passion for youth, and before long we had our first in-person meeting. Who could resist Wil’s contagious dedication to kids and fishing? It wasn’t long before we realized that Wil’s objectives of providing positive youth development through the outdoors and fishing was a great match for the USFWS work including outdoor education and recreation and conservation of habitats. Wil is an incredibly modest person with big ideas, with a sharp focus on mentoring, community, education and service. Who knew that, at the time, he was planning for the 28th year of a huge fishing event at Hagg Lake—an event that had served up to 1,500 local youth and families in a single weekend? We started our relationship through simply spending time getting to know each

other's missions and goals. Wil attended and assisted with our Tualatin River Bird Festival; FWS staff attended and assisted with the Hagg Lake event. As the relationship developed and people from both organizations began to meet and know each other, we knew there was something more than simply delivering special events. The relationship blossomed into planning together; imagining new opportunities; sharing resources; writing an agreement where we identified shared objectives and responsibilities; strategically aligning our efforts around the people we serve; and expanding our reach through programming that would not have been possible without one another. Some accomplishments are:

- Bringing over 2,000 youth and their families (over 2 years) to jump in a boat and catch a fish (sometimes for the first time!) and have positive family experiences in the outdoors.
- Developing a co-branded vision for a youth fishing event equipment trailer that will highlight I'm Hooked, FWS, and our shared events. (trailer purchased, now designing wrap, and stocking the inside)
- Developing deeper relationships with local schools, especially Merlo High School, and delivering programming at the school since students may not be able to access the events.
- Hosting smaller family fishing events in Washington County and Clark County
- Expanding I'm Hooked's brand through developing new multimedia products (e.g. video) to garner more support and participation.

The primary people that have been served are the youth and their families participating in events. The events reach far beyond the actual fishing and offer families access to other outdoor recreation, safety programs for youth, connections to local resources, and much more. With Wil's full time job working for Oregon State DHS, he was able to connect with youth and families that may not otherwise have the opportunity to participate. The 2017 Hagg Lake event served nearly 50% people of color, both the participants and the volunteers who helped make it happen.

This matters because, in I'm Hooked's words, they "provide youth with opportunities to learn new skills, to make a difference in their community, to interact with youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, gain experience in leadership and share decision-making....and instill appreciation for nature, conservation, restoration and education."

Recommendation: Go slow to go fast. There is no substitute for taking the time to get to know one another and finding our common ground.



WORK GROUP: Professions

The professions group selected a group coordinator, responsible for calling meetings and leading the group through a consensus based, co-created process to develop regional recommendations. Their initial ideas unintentionally catered to supporting mainstream, white-led organizations. Once they realized this, they interrupted their process to reevaluate who the recommendations were intended to support and favored input to more specifically support communities of color and low-income. The following is a collection of meeting note highlights, reflective questions and recommendations as documented by the group.

What are the priorities?

We hope to incorporate the following priorities into our plan:

- Sustainable funding
- Community centric (train me on how to clean my own backyard)
- Working with youth in the community
- Strong racial equity analysis
- Whole systems approach
- Climate justice intersecting with health and housing
- Incubate and grow leadership
- Continuum of career development with multiple entry points
- Family wage jobs
- Education pathways
- “legacy” has a negative connotation as does “weeds”

How are you integrating equity and inclusion in your process, decision-making, and resource allocation?

- Asking members what do you need to access and fully participate in the group and meetings?
- Consensus model of decision making
- Everyone has time to speak and give input
- End meetings on time

What does success look like?

Whatever we determine is the outcome of our group, the end result will ultimately address the following identified challenges: funding, trust, bias, transportation, opportunities and resources.

Priorities from last meeting (& from analysis) and ideas from today:

- Transferable skills
- Workforce development
- Funding for EJ/EE entrepreneurship
- Job shadow opportunities
- What systems support candidates of color?
- Leadership development/pathways (i.e. recycling careers, conservation)

- What are the current leadership development pathways as they relate to careers in the environmental field (i.e. recycling, conservation)?
- Is there a clear pathway that takes an individual from an entry-level position to a position of leadership and/or power?
- Review hiring process; how do employers find candidates? Review hiring process: how do you as an employer find candidates? Candidates of color?
- Equity/inclusion/racial lens. Evaluate culture/cultural norms. Evaluate organizational culture and cultural norms. Is it welcoming?
- Job pathways and understanding and addressing barriers to those opportunities. What are the barriers?
- Building capacity for culturally specific community based organizations. Including resource of information and competition.
- Refugees: Cultural gap adjustment. Refugee only job site?
- Supporting existing organizations in infrastructure and programmatic changes. How do you support existing organizations (partners and stakeholders) in infrastructure and programmatic changes?
- Social/emotional pieces? *(this was listed from last meeting but not clear with group)*
- How do we leverage relationships as an asset for workforce development? Leveraging affinity organizations and mainstream organizations for outreach.

Themes from list:

- a. Capacity building
- b. Workforce development/jobs
- c. Helping organizations review their hiring process and creating an inclusive hiring and onboarding process - *360 Equity lens with internal culture. That organizations can spend a lot of work with recruiting and hiring people of color but then the organization isn't ready.*

Workforce/Leadership Development Stakeholders:

- a. Applicant/Job Seeker
- b. Employer/Mainstream EE organization
- c. Building capacity for culturally specific community based organizations (resources, competition for \$\$).

Action: Power analysis/mapping environmental education. During the Youth Mentoring Collaborative, ask for any data or information that can point to a gap in youth leadership development in the environmental education field.

Observations:

- Recognition that most of the priorities from the work plan were focused on needs of white dominant organizations. Instead, to redirect focus to needs and priorities of communities of color.
- What are the types of collaborations regarding workforce development? What do they look like?
 - Creating innovative partnerships that extend capacity and job longevity to people of color to lead projects. Example from Sprina is the partnership with

Tryon Creek and Camp ELSO. Tryon will hire Camp ELSO counselors after their two-week session for the remainder to work at Tryon Creek summer camp.

- Important to provide small stipends for young kids.
- Make job descriptions fit what the person will actually be doing. Many applications get thrown out in the 1st round, because they don't write the language that is expected. Be careful to not tokenize people. Relationship building from the top down is important. Teach the leaders to reach out to people of color and communities of color. Government is linear and other communities see everything is connected.

Challenges & Recommendations

- **Funding:** Many times grants require communities to put up the money first then submit for reimbursement. This can be a significant challenge with resources that are already limited. We recommend that grantors set aside funds for immediate distribution to small community grantees as a form of pre-payment once funding has been approved. These small nonprofit partners who grantors intend to fund often have limited cash availability. Rather than following grantors standard protocol of requesting reimbursement, pre-paying can significantly reduce this barrier. We also recommend that Metro and City Bureaus create internal communication channels that can allow their departments to share information instead of asking nonprofit partners to submit paperwork multiple times. Examples of this challenge in action:
 1. Working with City of Portland/BES and their Community Watershed Stewardship Program with gift cards. Gift cards were purchased up front to distribute to youth. Even with documentation for distribution of those cards, when submitting a reimbursement, the City didn't allow the reimbursement cost (even though they had approved it with the original budget proposal).
 2. Camp ELSO was able to secure transportation funding support from multiple funders but because of their size and necessary processes in order to partner Camp ELSO had to front the cost upfront and wait to be reimbursed. This is a significant issue because transportation is the largest budget line for the program.
- **Follow through.** Follow through on approved agreements isn't consistent and then understandings change as the program is implemented. We recommend consistent follow through on agreements both before a program starts and once it is initiated. Once a partnership agreement is in place or a shared understanding is mutually accepted then this should not change. It is the responsibility of all parties to work to anticipate and plan ahead to address any problems that may arise down the line and to clearly articulate expectations and shared responsibilities.
- **Trust.** There isn't built trust with people of color groups. Extra hoops to navigate through to get things done. We recommend that partners and funders work to establish authentic relationships with community partners that is built on trust that better achieves equity through elimination of barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. This includes removing barriers and extra hoops that communities of color need to jump through. This can be accomplished by key decision makers and leaders representing both sides sitting down to build relationships, acknowledge historical inequities, and foster trust with both sides.

- **Bias.** There is bias around people with color and resources (\$\$). We recommend that partners and funders openly address their concerns around fiscal management and are open to addressing any positive or negative inclinations toward a community of color handling their own resources.
- **Transportation.** Access to parks and natural areas can be far with limited or no public transportation. This prevents people of color from visiting local parks and looking for accessing job opportunities outside of their communities. Suggestions included having a workforce shuttle (i.e. Park & Ride) to pick up people and take them to the job site. We also recommend that funders with access to different forms of transportation (i.e. department owned vehicles, buses, or vans) should establish a user agreement to allow communities of color to borrow or rent these vehicles at a highly reduced cost these modes of transportation. We also recommend that partners and funders with established corporate partnerships with either rental companies or other partners who own modes of transportation connect communities of color with those partners and advocate on their behalf.
- **Opportunities.** Many times job opportunities are just grunt work. We need to create opportunities that go beyond tradition work. We recommend that jobs in areas outside of manual labor be accessible to communities of color and low-income. We believe that creating opportunities in policy, planning, advocacy, entrepreneurship can further the development of careers in these areas that allow increased responsibility.
- **Resources** (\$ and time) We recommend that additional resources be allocated to address the above challenges. Additionally, we strongly recommend that time and money be allocated to better develop authentic relationships that enable the engagement with communities of color built on trust, open communication and full transparency in your processes.



Discussion & General Recommendations

We want to thank all partners, and funders (Metro Regional Government, Meyer Memorial Trust, Collins Foundation, Gray Family Foundation) involved in this project for their commitment and contributions to our co-created process. We also want to acknowledge the expansive number of individuals and organizations who although they did not participate in our project have been leading and fighting for justice in a variety of ways long before our work began. This project explored ways to create more inclusive environmental education. What we found is that becoming more inclusive requires the transformative work of relationship and analysis building on individual, organizational and systems levels of change.

Jenny de la Hoz's social network analysis (see Appendix L) of our project indicated that project partners increased social connections with one another and developed a stronger awareness of each other's work and purpose. This is good news because despite fundamental differences in our lived experiences, we can develop relationships across difference with deepening analysis around diversity, equity, and inclusion that supports our ability to work together more effectively in a changing paradigm.

We offer you encouragement to be part of the change for our collective liberation. May this project offer support to what you are already doing and the inspiration to do more.

Some general themes, findings and recommendations to keep in mind:

- **Shared Racial Equity Analysis** – develop a common understanding of race and equity; many of our team members participated in Center for Diversity & the Environment's *Environment 2042 Leadership Program*.
- **Inclusive Leadership** – model inclusivity on all levels; follow leadership from communities of color and low-income and pay them for their time.
- **Value Process & Product** – working across difference to create a new paradigm takes time, time where important relationships can be built and new non-dominant processes embraced.
- **Balance Equity & Inclusivity** – pay attention to power dynamics; create space for diverse voices to lead and opportunities for all perspectives to be valued.
- **Power & Justice** – prioritize organizational and community assessments of equity through an historic and current lens.
- **Culture** – value intersectionality and community driven processes and success.
- **Leadership Development & Jobs** – build pipelines for diverse youth to become conservation leaders and capacity for culturally specific organizations to train and employ them.
- **Funding** – encourage fiscal sponsorships and resources directed to communities of color and low-income.

