



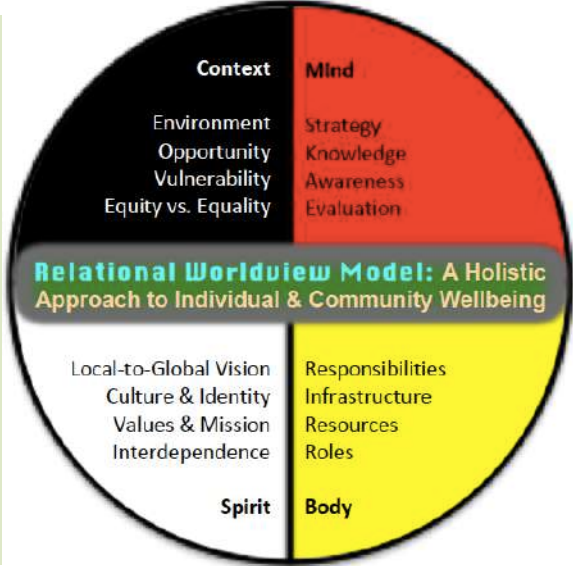
Building an Inclusive Environmental Movement Through Environmental Justice & Education in Portland, Oregon Executive Summary - February 2018

The Environmental Education Association of Oregon (EEAO), Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) and Center for Diversity and the Environment (CDE) engaged with twenty-five organizational partners from 2015-2017 in Portland, Oregon to co-develop a shared regional vision for inclusive environmental education, one that connects with and supports environmental justice. We were interested in addressing root causes and impacts of the divide between our communities or more specifically that:



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



Shared regional vision for inclusive environmental education



Commitment from all partners to implement recommendation



Environmental education led by people of color and low income



Mainstream organizations committed to inclusivity



People of color and low income adequately resourced for this work

Project partners were recruited to serve in “leadership” and “ally” roles. Leadership members work for organizations that primarily serve communities of color and low-income and were paid to lead our collaboratively designed process. Ally members represent mainstream (typically white-led) environmental organizations and were in a support role. This structure shifted the paradigm away from dominant white middle to upper-class leadership to leadership by diverse communities with a more holistic understanding of their community’s needs.

Partners from both groups worked together through a series of meetings, retreats, work groups and community input. Two main themes of “**relationship building**” and “**shared analysis**” emerged as priorities by the group. These themes were further defined through interviews with our leadership team project partners. The following three sub-categories were identified:

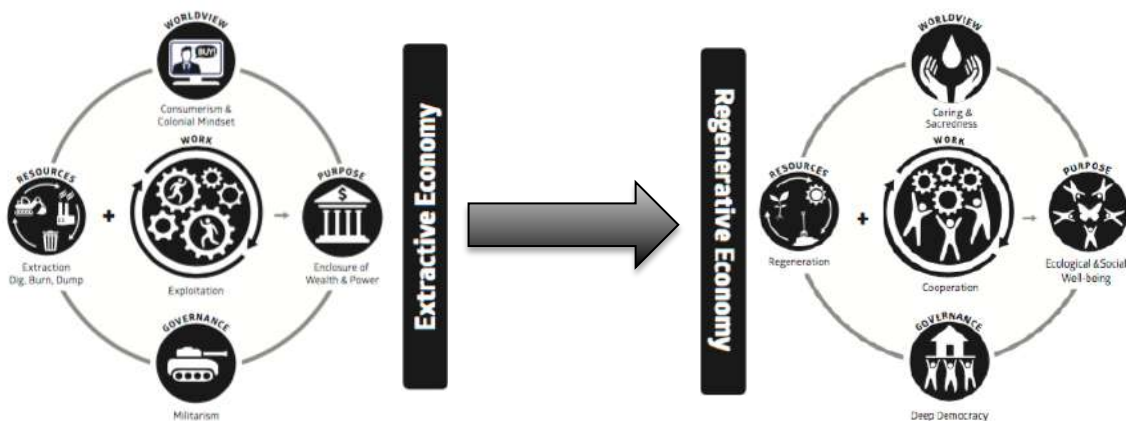
- Power – equity and justice
- People – culture and relationships
- Profession – leadership and workforce development

These three themes formed our 2017 work groups and priority areas of interest to explore in order to build more inclusive environmental education. High-level summary recommendations from each work group follow and can be found with more detail in the full report. These recommendations are for funders, environmental educators, community partners, government officials, nonprofits, or anyone looking for advice on what and how to prioritize activities and relationship building to create not only a practice of more inclusive environmental education but a more inclusive society where we all thrive.

SHARED REGIONAL VISION: 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.

Power 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 Movement Generation’s Just Transition Framework:



Developed by Movement Generation
with **OUR POWER CAMPAIGN**
COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR A JUST TRANSITION
<http://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/>

People Recommendations:

- Be **flexible**. Let go of expectations that don't make sense anymore. Be comfortable (actually, anticipate) that there will be many situations/changing conditions that may require flexibility.
- Collaboration is the direct result of patience, listening, showing up, and respecting the process. Balance is at the heart of this work.
- Through relationship building and acting on what we hear from our partners we can slowly **rebuild the trust** necessary to be truly inclusive in our work.
- Make time to learn how to respectfully engage across differences. Show up, listen, practice humility [and compassion], 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.
- Go slow to go fast. There is no substitute for taking the time to get to know one another and finding our common ground [in this way, we build authentic relationships].

Profession Recommendations:

- **Funding:** 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.
- **Follow through.** 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.** 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.** 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,



*"We are not just building a bridge – we are constructing a boat we can float down the river together."
Leadership Team Member*

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.** 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.

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 directly 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. Despite fundamental differences in our lived experiences, we can develop and strengthen relationships across difference with an equity lens that support 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 whether you're an environmental educator, community partner, funder, or anyone working to build a more vibrant and just future for us all:

- **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 leaders from communities of color and low-income, and pay institutionally under-resourced leaders 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.

