



# Diversity and the Conservation Movement

Developed by the National Audubon Society in partnership with the North American Association for Environmental Education, Toyota TogetherGreen, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and EECapacity.



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*Diversity is about strengthening the movement we are dedicated to by making it resilient and capable of adapting, regardless of what we face in the future.*

—Emily Enderle, Earthjustice



# Diversity and the Conservation Movement

By Marcelo Bonta • Tony DeFalco • Chandra Taylor Smith



# Preface

A great deal of passion, commitment, and thought has gone into creating this document. It evolved out of the sincere desire of conservation and education leaders to create a more diverse and equitable conservation movement. Those of us who contributed to the report believe in treating everyone equally and fairly, in respecting individual differences, and in seeking to expand our knowledge about people, cultures, and practices different from our own. We care deeply about the environment and are ardent conservationists and lovers of wildlife. We also want to be accountable, to make a difference, and to be catalysts for a movement in which equity, diversity, and inclusion are the norm—not the exception. We all have painfully observed that when diversity is not valued, all life is diminished.

We believe in the necessity of difficult dialogues about diversity, inclusion, and conservation, and we fervently want to open the conversation. Our thoughts about how to create a more diverse conservation culture will continue to evolve, shaped by our experiences and interactions. The goal of this document is to spur honest and open discussions and create safe spaces in communities and organizations where we can have those discussions and think collectively about constructive next steps.

We are profoundly aware that dialogue alone is not enough. Cultural norms need to shift. New leadership must be developed. Power must be shared. The current civil unrest rooted in racism, bigotry, and other social injustices around the world shows how urgent it is to create a more diverse conservation movement, especially in the face of global warming and other threats to our quality of life.

Efforts to bring about change have already begun. Groups like Green 2.0 are already pushing mainstream environmental and conservation NGOs, foundations, and government agencies to recognize their historical lack of diversity, especially among their leadership, and to tackle the issue.

But we know there is much more work ahead. We will have to further our understanding of differing worldviews and belief systems and learn how to develop a conservation ethic that embraces social equity as fundamental to success. And while time is of the essence, we recognize that patience, empathy, and persistence are crucial to achieving sustainable social and ecological change.

We hope this document serves as an impetus for you to help build a more inclusive conservation movement. The stories and case studies in the text lead by example: they show how conservation programs and organizations can thrive with greater diversity. We also include connections to worksheets and planning tools from the Tools of Engagement (see resources) that will help you develop and practice the ideas shared here.

Finally, we hope you will consider this document to be a personal invitation from us to share your thoughts. Together, we can create a more inclusive environmental movement.

Chandra Taylor Smith, Ph.D.  
VP, Community Conservation and Education  
National Audubon Society  
2015



## Acknowledgments

How can we create a more inclusive environmental movement? How can organizations working in conservation better reflect the changing demographics of our society? How can we build on the wonderful programs and initiatives taking place in every corner of our continent?

This module explores how to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the conservation movement and how to increase the reach and impact of our collective work. Environmental and social threats such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, water shortages, and growing economic disparity between the rich and poor affect all segments of society. To address these problems, we need everyone at the table. That means bringing together all segments of society that traditionally have not been included in the mainstream environmental movement—people of color, religious organizations, different socio-economic classes, and so on.

The good news is that many efforts have already begun, and we are steadily making progress. The more we engage in conversations, build leadership, and develop skills, the faster we can create the diverse and inclusive organizations, programs, and movements that we want and need. I want to personally thank the people and organizations that made this module come to life. The incredibly talented writing team of Marcelo Bonta, Tony DeFalco, and Chandra Taylor Smith has brought invaluable insight and awareness to this module and to the field as a whole. The advisory team included Janet Ady, Sara St. Antoine, Christy Merrick, Haley McGlaufflin, Lori Mann, Gus Medina, Sai Muddasani, Elaine O'Sullivan, Angela Park, and Akiima Price. The National Audubon Society, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Toyota TogetherGreen, the North American Association for Environmental Education, and EECapacity provided on-going support. All these groups believe in the power of education and the importance of a more diverse and inclusive movement. And a giant thanks to my colleague, Chandra Taylor Smith, the Vice President for Community Conservation and Education at Audubon, for her input into this module and her lifelong work to create a more diverse and sustainable society. And finally, thanks to John Carey, for his expert help in editing the final version. I am deeply grateful for all these contributions and to the reviewers who provided feedback along the way.

We look forward to hearing your comments and building on the work in this module. We hope the ideas and information we've presented here will help us all improve our practice to create a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive society.

Judy Braus  
Executive Director  
North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)  
2015



Toucanet

Gerry Ellis

### National Audubon Society

Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Now in its second century, Audubon works throughout the hemisphere to connect people with birds, nature, and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, and scientific, education, and civic engagement programs involve millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Audubon believes in the power of education and engagement to inspire people to learn, care, and get involved. Through our work, Audubon is empowering current and future generations to create a healthier and more just and sustainable world.

[audubon.org](http://audubon.org)



### Toyota TogetherGreen

TogetherGreen is a conservation education program of Audubon in alliance with Toyota. Through national and local programming, TogetherGreen promotes innovation, leadership, and opportunities that inspire people everywhere to take action at home, in their communities, and beyond to improve the health of the planet. Millions of people have taken part in TogetherGreen activities, including more than 1,000 partner organizations across the country. The program funds and supports innovative conservation projects, leadership development, and volunteerism to engage people in habitat, water, and energy conservation, and works to engage people of all backgrounds and interests to achieve results and create a healthier and more just society.

[togethergreen.org](http://togethergreen.org)



### NAAEE

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is the largest membership organization in North America dedicated to strengthening environmental education and increasing the visibility and effectiveness of the field. Through its network of individual and organizational members around the world, including more than 50 state, provincial, and regional affiliates across North America, NAAEE has led efforts to create a more just and sustainable society through education. NAAEE's work focuses on promoting dialogue with leaders from diverse backgrounds and organizations, hosting an annual international conference, providing leadership, inspiring innovative programming and research, linking education and conservation, and promoting best practices in the field.

[naaee.org](http://naaee.org)





### U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the premier government agency dedicated to the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats. It is the only agency in the federal government whose primary responsibility is management of these important natural resources for the American public. The Service also helps ensure a healthy environment for people through its work benefiting wildlife, and by providing opportunities for Americans to enjoy the outdoors and our shared natural heritage. The Service is responsible for implementing and enforcing some of our nation's most important environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

[fws.gov](http://fws.gov)



### EECapacity

The Expanding Capacity in Environmental Education Project, or EECapacity, encourages innovation in the field of environmental education by promoting the exchange of ideas among professionals with diverse perspectives and providing resources and professional development opportunities. EECapacity conducts a number of activities in three broad areas: Increasing Professional Development and Strengthening the Field, Promoting Research and Innovation, and Providing Technology to Support the Field. EECapacity is funded by a generous grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Education through a cooperative agreement with Cornell University and includes a consortium of organizations and partners, including the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and EEExchange.

[eecapacity.net](http://eecapacity.net)



*The great challenge of the 21st Century is to raise people everywhere to a decent standard of living while preserving as much of the rest of life as possible.*

—Edward O. Wilson





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# Diversity and the Conservation Movement

Throughout its history, the mainstream conservation<sup>1</sup> movement in the United States has mainly attracted a narrow segment of the population—primarily white, wealthier Americans. This demographic prevails today. The leadership, boards, staff, and memberships of mainstream environmental groups continue to be largely white, upper middle-class, and older.<sup>2</sup> This failure to include other segments of society is a serious limitation. It reduces the reach and impact of all groups working in conservation—from non-profit organizations to foundations to government agencies. All too often, it also means that the support of nature and conservation by people from diverse backgrounds—and the toll of environmental problems on less wealthy communities—is neglected or ignored.

In fact, countless people and communities outside of the mainstream movement’s traditional demographics care deeply about the environment and demonstrate strong conservation values and practices. Many underrepresented constituencies—including low-income communities and communities of color—have a long history of conserving the land. In many cases, conservation is part of their cultural practices.<sup>3</sup> The more the mainstream conservation movement learns about and appreciates the incredibly diverse history of conservation, the more relevant and inviting the movement will become. And if it does become more inclusive, the movement will have a greater impact in the 21st century.

We believe that success in addressing conservation challenges depends on inclusive efforts that incorporate multiple views of valuing and practicing conservation. Diversifying the conservation movement means more than simply recruiting people from diverse backgrounds to enter traditional conservation fields. It also means understanding better how all people relate to, engage with, and care about the environment. And it means understanding how environmental threats—from water pollution to asthma to severe weather—impact all individuals and communities.

This module, an appendix to *Tools of Engagement—A Toolkit for Engaging People in Conservation*, examines some of the barriers and challenges to diversifying the conservation movement. We have included references throughout and links to the “Steps to Success” and other planning tools found in the *Toolkit*. (This  indicates references to *Tools of Engagement*.) This guide also provides recommendations, tips, and examples for increasing diversity and inclusion in your work.

Most of the examples are drawn from the experiences of conservation groups that have worked to diversify along racial and socio-economic lines. Your own diversity needs may be focused on these or any number of other constituencies; for example, stakeholders who have been excluded from (or are at odds with) the conservation movement, people with disabilities, the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer community, or religious organizations of any faith. Regardless of the public you serve, your commitment to promoting meaningful consultation, coordination, and shared leadership with a greater diversity of people will go a long way toward strengthening the conservation field and building better communities. The suggested readings (on page 28) provide more background and strategies for improving your cultural competence and knowledge of how people from all backgrounds value conservation.

<sup>1</sup> By conservation we mean to conserve—keep from harm, loss, change, or decay—and restore wildlife, their habitats, and natural ecosystems for the benefit for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity.

<sup>2</sup> Dorceta Taylor, “The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies,” (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Green 2.0, 2014), 3-6, <http://diversegreen.org/report/>.

<sup>3</sup> UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues, “The Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and Policies for Sustainable Development: Updates and Trends in the Second Decade of the World’s Indigenous People,” (New York, NY: June 2014), [http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/wcip/IASG%20Thematic%20Paper\\_%20Traditional%20Knowledge%20-%20rev1.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/wcip/IASG%20Thematic%20Paper_%20Traditional%20Knowledge%20-%20rev1.pdf).

## Conservation—Past, Present, and Future

As we work to diversify the conservation movement—including our leadership, staff, boards, and volunteers, as well as the work we do—it helps to examine the attitudes and practices that have kept conservation from being more equitable, diverse, and inclusive. For example, some people believe that whites care more about the environment than do people of color.<sup>4</sup> However, a number of studies show that people of color care deeply about conservation, and that they have voted in greater numbers than whites to support environmental causes. How was the myth that people of color don't care created and perpetuated? What might cause some people to believe such myths about others? Understanding our own cultures, traditions, and biases can help us understand and address issues today, and can help us create a stronger and more inclusive movement.

### Conservation through Different Cultural Lenses

Histories of the conservation movement typically highlight charismatic leaders, such as Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir, along with the work of those visionary leaders in protecting our natural resources. We are greatly indebted to them for creating parks and protecting our lands and water. Still, prevailing views about race and class have influenced the conservation movement throughout its history,<sup>5</sup> and our early conservation efforts were no exception. For instance, pristine wilderness areas were created or protected by separating people and nature—even though this strategy diverged from generations of indigenous practice. As a result, most of our national parks were created by forcibly removing Native Americans, people of color, and poor rural whites, while access to parks was often based on privilege and class.

Wealthy white males dominated the visible leadership of the conservation movement and its largest, most powerful organizations (both government agencies and non-profit organizations). Meanwhile, historical accounts have tended to neglect the contributions of indigenous people, women, and people of color, such as the Buffalo Soldiers, a regiment of African-Americans who were among the first park rangers in the Sierra Nevada.

What's more, pioneering conservation and environmental policies, from the creation of national parks starting in the 1870s to the historic regulation of air, water, and solid waste in the 1970s, typically brought both the fewest benefits and the greatest environmental burdens to communities of color and the poor. Those disparities persist today, as the legacy of a lack of inclusion in policy-making throughout these years.



To correct this historical legacy, we need to break down the mistaken long-held preconception that environmental concerns are more central to some cultures (such as affluent whites) than to others. We need to build greater understanding of and appreciation for the rich variety of connections to the environment across all cultures. That, in turn, helps improve cultural competency (see box on page 10) and diversify the conservation movement. Many of the programs and statements highlighted in this guide reflect Native American, African American, Hispanic/Latino American, and Asian American involvement in conservation.

<sup>4</sup> Public Opinion Strategies/Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates. 2009. Key Findings from National Voter Survey on Conservation Among Voters of Color.

<sup>5</sup> For more in depth information about the history of the mainstream conservation movement, which blossomed according to scholars during the progressive era—the two decades surrounding the 1900s and then resurged during the modern environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s see,—Stradling, David, ed. *Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

## Current Trends

The conservation and environmental fields have a mixed track record for engaging and serving a wide array of communities and constituencies, and especially for reaching across race and class. Despite some good intentions, mainstream environmental organizations have often struggled to build coalitions with communities who are affected by and care deeply about environmental issues, as illustrated by the research below:

- A recent study from the Outdoor Foundation found that youth of color are significantly underrepresented in outdoor recreation, despite an emerging body of research showing that meaningful outdoor experiences during childhood are often critical for developing a lifelong environmental ethic<sup>7</sup>
- A recent poll of minority voters showed that 68% of them feel that climate change is an immediate problem that cannot be left for future generations to remedy<sup>8</sup>
- The same poll showed that 76% of those voters feel there are positive economic benefits to addressing climate change issues<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Dorceta Taylor, a Professor at University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources & Environment, recently published a robust study<sup>10</sup> about the current trends on diversity in the conservation movement: "The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations, and Government Agencies."

### *The study's key findings include:*

- Gender diversity has improved in environmental organizations, but the gains are mostly for white women
- The 3.2 million members and volunteers of environmental organizations are still predominantly white
- Most environmental organizations lack a diversity manager or committee, despite acknowledging the need to diversify their boards and staff
- The recruitment process for environmental organizations is not conducive to the hiring of ethnic minorities, and continues to replicate the current workforce
- Collaborations between environmental organizations and ethnic minority or low-income organizations are still uncommon
- The environmental professionals interviewed in this study described the culture of environmental organizations as "alienating" when it comes to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, ethnic minorities, and the poor

## Cultural Competence<sup>6</sup>

Cultural competence, in the context of human resources, refers to the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people of differing cultures and backgrounds within an organization for the benefit of all.

### The Four Components of Cultural Competence

- **Awareness:** Be conscious of your personal cultural worldview and how it shapes your interactions with others
- **Attitude:** Consider how your beliefs and values inform those interactions
- **Knowledge:** Seek out and retain information about different cultures and perceptions
- **Skills:** Using the other components, develop appropriate methods of communicating across cultures

### Snapshot of U.S. Statistics

- Currently, **37% of the U.S. population** is comprised of **people of color**. The U.S. Census predicts that by 2060, people of color will make up 57% of the U.S. population.<sup>11</sup>
- **45.3 million** people in the United States lived **at or below the federal poverty line** in 2013.<sup>12</sup>
- The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates that there are **8.8 million LGBTQ people in the United States**.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mercedes Martin and Billy Vaughn, "Cultural Competence: The Nuts & Bolts of Diversity & Inclusion," Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Management, February 12, 2007, 31-36.

<sup>7</sup> The Outdoor Foundation, Special Report on Youth: The Next Generation of Outdoor Champions, (Boulder, Colorado: The Outdoor Foundation, 2010), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Brilliant Corners. "Green for All | Climate Change and Communities of Color: Key Poll Findings and Top Lines," (Oakland, CA: June 2014), <http://greenforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ExecutiveReport.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Dorceta Taylor, "The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies," (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Green 2.0, 2014), 3-6, <http://diversegreen.org/report/>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now," December 12, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2013," September 16, 2014, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-169.html>.

<sup>13</sup> CJ Gates, "LGB/T Demographics: Comparisons among population-based surveys," (Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2014), <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/lgbt-demogs-sep-2014.pdf>.

## Looking Forward

Despite these sobering trends, we have every reason to feel hopeful as we work to broaden our reach. Diversifying the conservation movement means working with a larger array of partners and serving a broader community of citizens. For many people, this is a moral imperative in its own right.

Underrepresented constituencies hold enormous potential for leading the field of conservation in a new, more effective direction. Many are already deeply committed to conservation causes, especially as awareness grows that environmental harm disproportionately affects lower income communities and people of color. In fact, a recent 2009 voting poll shows people of color significantly more concerned about various conservation issues than their white counterparts.<sup>14</sup>

Several other polls had similar results. In a 2002 exit poll for California's \$2.6 billion bond measure for water quality enhancement and open space protection, 77 percent of African Americans, 74 percent of Latinos, and 60 percent of Asian-Americans voted "yes," compared to only 56 percent of whites.

In case after case, voters of color express concern about the condition of land, water, and wildlife and the lack of support for investments in conservation that are equal to or greater than those expressed by white voters. Communities of color in America are some of the most dedicated supporters of conservation.

Because of that dedication—as well as their different perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds—new constituencies may provide innovative solutions to the conservation movement's most pressing problems, along with the leadership to implement those solutions.



### Climate Change and Vulnerable Communities<sup>15</sup>

*The impacts of climate change are likely to be felt disproportionately by those who also suffer from socioeconomic inequalities. In the United States, this includes many Hispanics, African Americans, and other racial and ethnic groups. These groups are likely to be more vulnerable to heat waves, extreme weather events, environmental degradation, and subsequent labor market dislocations. Climate and energy policies can help reduce these disparities. Limiting greenhouse gas emissions will reduce climate impacts while also decreasing air pollution. Since low-income and minority communities are now more adversely affected by air pollution than wealthier ones are, they will have the most to gain from policies that improve air quality. Climate and energy policies can also bring green jobs and other new economic opportunities for low-income and minority communities, and can improve health by providing more opportunities for active and less carbon-intensive lifestyles.*

<sup>14</sup> Metz, David and Weigel, Lori. 2009. Key Findings from National Voter Survey on Conservation Among Voters of Color. Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin, and Associates and Public Opinion Strategies, Oakland, CA. (Memo: October 6, 2009)

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Leiserowitz and Karen Akerlof, "Race, Ethnicity and Public Responses to Climate Change," (New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change, 2010), 4, <http://environment.yale.edu/uploads/RaceEthnicity2010.pdf>.

# A Dictionary of Diversity

Discussions of diversity typically include a myriad of jargon-laden terms. As you work to diversify your project or organization, it is critical that you clarify your terms, ensure you're comfortable with the language you've chosen, and practice being as specific as possible. Each organization needs to establish its own key terms and definitions based on its unique needs, but the definitions used by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world's largest membership organization devoted to human resource management, may provide a useful starting point.

**Diversity** is defined as “the collective mixture of differences and similarities that includes, for example, individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviors”, according to the Society for Human Resource Management.

Note that this definition of diversity is focused on the system level—a group of people, a region, an organization, and so on. Diversity is not an individual attribute; there is no such thing as a “diverse” person. Whether or not an individual adds to the diversity of a group depends on the specific demographics being measured within that group.

**Inclusion** means welcoming and including a diverse range of people, and having their input and perspectives valued and considered within the context of a collective endeavor.

While diversity can be measured in demographic data, inclusion is about process and culture. In general, the more diverse a group, the more challenging inclusion becomes. Organizations that do attract individuals who reflect the country's demographics but ignore the need to create an inclusive culture often find low retention rates.

I recently began focusing my camera lens on people of color who enjoy nature and the outdoors. In my travels around the country over the last decades, I became concerned by how often I found myself to be the only African American or person of color in many of the outdoor wilderness areas in which I worked or vacationed. What I realized towards the end of this book project was that you really cannot discuss the subjects of nature and people of color without visiting a number of other topics that at first may appear to have nothing to do with the environment. The first and obvious ones are slavery, racial prejudice, and personal safety, followed by cultural traditions, economics, and few others. The topic of nature and the environment rarely crosses paths with these other weighted issues, except when you are speaking about people of color. For this segment of the population, these issues are very real and are crucial to their participation in the outdoors. (p. 6)

***Black and Brown Faces in American Wild Places: African Americans Making Nature and the Environment a Part of Their Everyday Lives*** is an inspirational collection of stories of African American's experience in nature, edited by nature and wildlife photographer, Dudley Edmondson.

**Environmental Racism** refers to those institutional rules, regulations, policies, or government or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for least desirable land uses and higher adverse environmental impacts. Environmental racism includes the unequal exposure to toxic and hazardous waste and the systematic exclusion of people of color from environmental decisions affecting their communities.

**Environmental Equity** refers to equal protection under environmental laws and equal enforcement of those laws. Examples include non-discriminatory zoning and cleanup of hazardous wastes in all communities, and the effective regulation of industrial pollution, regardless of the racial and economic composition of the community.

**Environmental Justice** is broader in scope than environmental equity and refers to cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities, where all people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive.



## Clarifying your purpose



*Unless we diversify our ranks and become more representative of the nation's changing demographics, our profession and the resources we protect will not survive...<sup>16</sup>*

The first step in beginning your diversity work is defining your terms (see page 12). This doesn't simply mean coming up with a general definition of diversity; it also means deciding what form of diversity your organization seeks.

**When clarifying your diversity priorities, avoid thinking of audiences to target; rather, consider how to make your work more inclusive of a diversity of audiences.**

Once you've taken this important first step, you are ready to clarify why you are undertaking this effort to diversify your work. Ask yourself:

- 1) Why are diversity, inclusion, and equity important to your success?
- 2) What risks do you face if diversity, inclusion, and equity are ignored?
- 3) What is your plan for strengthening your work and helping you achieve specific outcomes through greater diversity, inclusion, and equity?

<sup>16</sup> Roel Lopez and Columbus Brown, "Why Diversity Matters," *The Wildlife Professional* 5, no. 2, (2011): 21, [http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/twp/workforce\\_diversity.pdf](http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/twp/workforce_diversity.pdf).

### Gardening Angels

The Greener Schools initiative of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council began creating school gardening programs in some of Detroit's most impoverished neighborhoods to bring urban youth into closer contact with nature. But early on, its leaders identified something missing from these programs: age diversity. It was great to get a bunch of teenagers turning barren schoolyards into gardens. But wouldn't the program be richer if it could also involve older residents of the community? Many of the elders had been living in the neighborhood for most of their lives and knew the history of the schools and schoolyards. Many had spent their childhoods in the South and still remembered the vegetables and flowers they grew there with their families. Many were excellent gardeners who had already organized their own gardening clubs at nearby retirement homes. With a little outreach and a few vans, the Greener Schools initiative was able to bring these wise elders to the local schools to serve as mentors for the young people. Now dubbed "Gardening Angels," the elders are sharing their time, knowledge, and their stories, while delighting in a new way of connecting to their old neighborhoods and their newer residents.

Many authors have described the importance and benefits of expanding the constituency for conservation and making the movement more open, engaging, and inclusive. As you think through your own theory of change (see box below), here are some of the results you can achieve (based on these authors' arguments and findings) by widening your organization's reach:

- **Improving cultural competency** to enable you to work with people who have different backgrounds, approaches, and worldviews than you do. By acknowledging, appreciating, and learning from others, you can work together on creative solutions that integrate multiple perspectives. You can also work with your partners to marry traditional knowledge with scientific findings.
- **Building a bigger, more powerful constituency.** Engaging diverse audiences makes sense for the simple reason that it increases the number of participants in the conservation movement. Business as usual means continuing to reach a narrow slice of the American public. Working with new audiences can create new supporters, leaders, and problem-solvers, and boost overall energy.
- **Becoming more effective and gaining competitive advantages as an organization.** The skills you will develop through increased cultural competency are invaluable, and can attract diverse public and political audiences who can greatly benefit your mission.
- **Developing a stronger fundraising base** by widening the number and types of grants for which you are eligible. You will also be able to solicit support from a more diverse base of individual donors.
- **Becoming preferred employers in the field** by increasing your capacity to recruit and retain staff from all backgrounds.
- **Developing resilience.** Greater biodiversity in a natural system makes that system more resilient and adaptable to change; in an organization, it can provide resilience and adaptability in the face of crises.
- **Connecting with a broader network of partners.** A commitment to diversity can enable connections to new individuals and organizations that can provide leverage, new sources of funding, and new pathways to conservation.
- **Nurturing creativity and innovation.** Diversity provides a pool of creativity and energy that a less diverse organization often lacks when it comes to problem solving.



### Theory of Change<sup>17</sup>

Theory of change is a description of the process of planned social change, from the assumptions that guide its design to the long-term goals it seeks to achieve. For more about theory of change, see Tool #29 on page 170 in *Tools of Engagement*.

## Finding Common Ground

In 2000, The Trustees of Reservations' leadership felt they needed to re-assess their work. A 120-year-old organization, The Trustees of Reservations is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving natural and historical places in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The organization's mission is to "preserve, for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts." Like many conservation organizations, The Trustees of Reservations was successful at working with white, rural, and suburban communities. But the organization's leaders recognized that the demographics of the state were rapidly changing. They felt that they needed to engage all people if they were to remain relevant and accountable to Massachusetts residents.

As one part of that effort, they offered about 75 percent of a parcel of prime donated farmland to Nuestras Raíces (Our Roots), a community-based organization that promotes economic, human, and community development through projects related to food, agriculture, and the environment. Nuestras Raíces works with Latino immigrants who come from farming and land-based communities in their homeland. Through this collaboration, Nuestras Raíces achieves its goals of increasing food security, economic development, community building, and environmental protection, and of helping immigrants adjust to a new home. Meanwhile, Trustees of Reservations continues to protect special places and increase its overall efficiency by providing value to a growing and influential community in Massachusetts.

<sup>17</sup> National Audubon Society, *Tools of Engagement: A Toolkit for Engaging People in Conservation*, p.90, [www.audubon.org/toolkit](http://www.audubon.org/toolkit).



## Focusing in

The next step to diversifying your work and your organization is to focus inward. Only after focusing on yourself, your team, and your organization, will you be ready to focus out on building relationships with new communities.

- **Focus on yourself.** As a leader, you need to be prepared to articulate your organization's vision for this work. But it's also important to clarify your personal stake in it. Why do the issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity matter to you? Potential partners will likely ask you about this.

Leading the transformation of the conservation field in this arena can require great personal effort, including a commitment to lifelong learning, the willingness to acknowledge privilege and power dynamics, and the ability to endure the inevitable discomfort we all face when learning new skills and receiving personal feedback on issues that may be scary and confusing. Leadership in this work requires a willingness to delve into the complex history and present-day realities of discrimination, oppression, exclusion, and inequity that exist in all areas of American life—including the conservation and environmental fields.

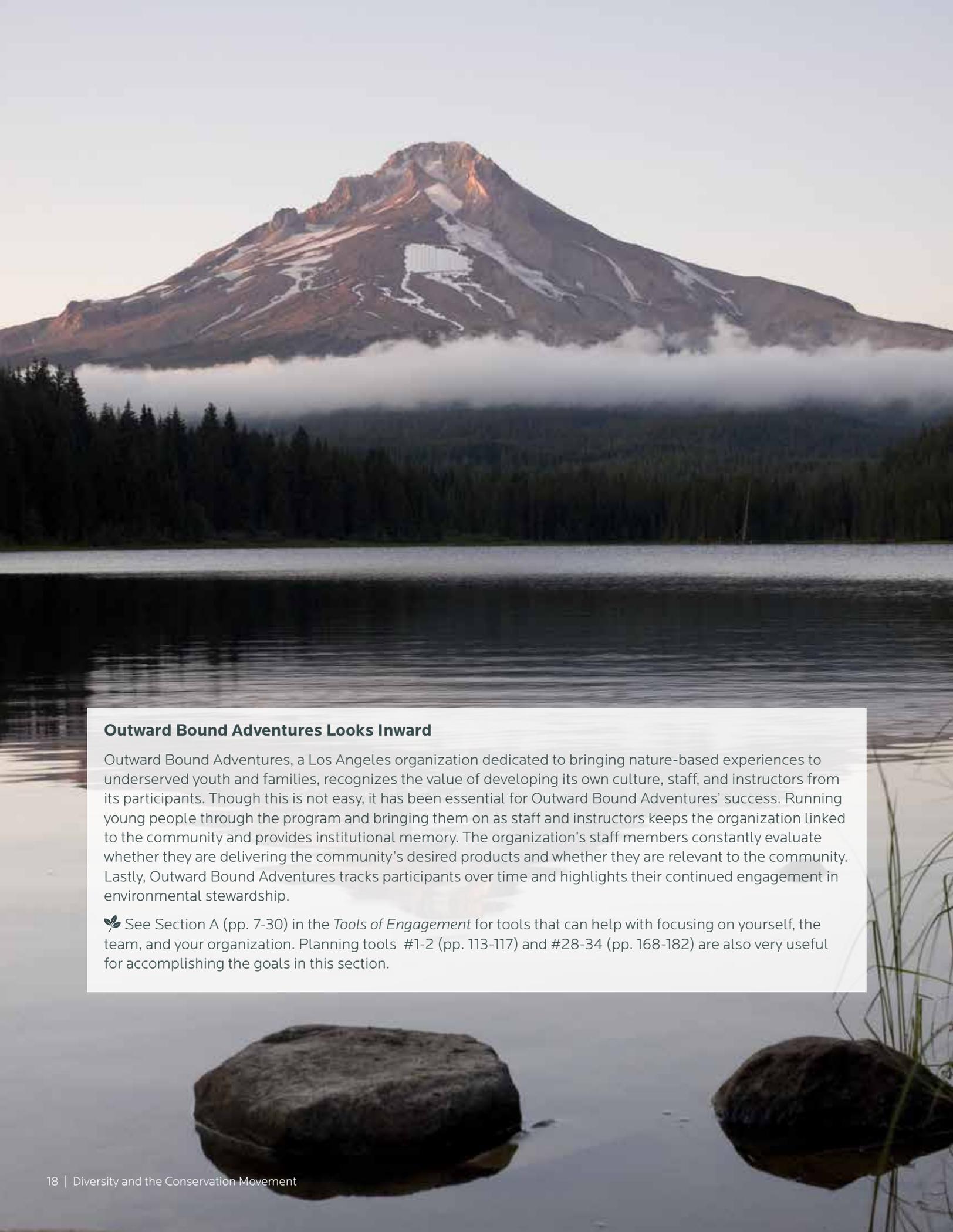
- **Focus on your team.** Assess and supplement the knowledge and skills of your team. What personal and professional backgrounds, competencies, and diversity and inclusion skills are represented? Do you have the cultural competence to do this work? (See box on page 10.) Do you need to invest in further learning and competencies before you embark on external work?

### Creating Alternatives for the Boston Community

Community empowerment was at the forefront of Charlie Lord's mind in 1993 when he set up Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE) as an environmental justice center providing legal and educational programs to low-income communities of color in Boston. Lord recognized that he and his co-founder, both recent graduates of the University of Virginia Law School, were outsiders in the places they hoped to work. With the mentorship of Luke Cole (a pioneer in the field of environmental justice), and the book *Lawyering for Social Justice* as a handbook, the co-founders developed a thoughtful approach for engaging the local community. Some decisions were big—such as a commitment to hiring local staff members, locating their offices in the community, and putting listening ahead of talking. Some decisions were seemingly small—such as not sitting at the head of the table in meetings with local partners. At one early meeting, Lord recalls, leaders from a community organization called the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) described a number of local projects. Afterward, Lord suggested that many of these—from cleaning up contaminated soils to fighting a planned asphalt plant in the neighborhood—were things that ACE could assist with. When the meeting concluded, DSNI executive director Rogelio Whittington turned to him and said, “You know, if you'd come in here telling me the definition of the environment and telling me what we should be doing, I would have given you a polite good-bye and you never would have heard from me again. As it is, we just might call you up.” They did. Nearly two decades later, ACE has helped achieved a host of environmental successes and its leadership has long since come from members of the local community.

- **Focus on your organization.** In an ideal world, diversity, inclusion, and equity would be embedded in your strategic plan; your organization would implement the detailed goals and actions in the plan on an ongoing basis, and senior leaders would be directly engaged in managing this work. But this is seldom the reality. One consistent criticism of conservation organizations is that their diversity-related programs are tangential to the core work and are often marginalized compared to priority programs and strategies. You'll need to make a concerted effort to connect your work to your organization's strategic plan and other concurrent efforts to increase diversity, inclusion, and equity. And you'll need meaningful buy-in and support from your organization's leaders to ensure that your efforts are successful.

Also, take a good look at your organization's past work in this area. Does it have the credibility required to play a leadership role in projects focused on engaging broader constituencies? Or do you need to work with partners that have that credibility? What can you do to strengthen your credibility and authenticity?



### **Outward Bound Adventures Looks Inward**

Outward Bound Adventures, a Los Angeles organization dedicated to bringing nature-based experiences to underserved youth and families, recognizes the value of developing its own culture, staff, and instructors from its participants. Though this is not easy, it has been essential for Outward Bound Adventures' success. Running young people through the program and bringing them on as staff and instructors keeps the organization linked to the community and provides institutional memory. The organization's staff members constantly evaluate whether they are delivering the community's desired products and whether they are relevant to the community. Lastly, Outward Bound Adventures tracks participants over time and highlights their continued engagement in environmental stewardship.

🌿 See Section A (pp. 7-30) in the *Tools of Engagement* for tools that can help with focusing on yourself, the team, and your organization. Planning tools #1-2 (pp. 113-117) and #28-34 (pp. 168-182) are also very useful for accomplishing the goals in this section.

## Focusing on your constituencies

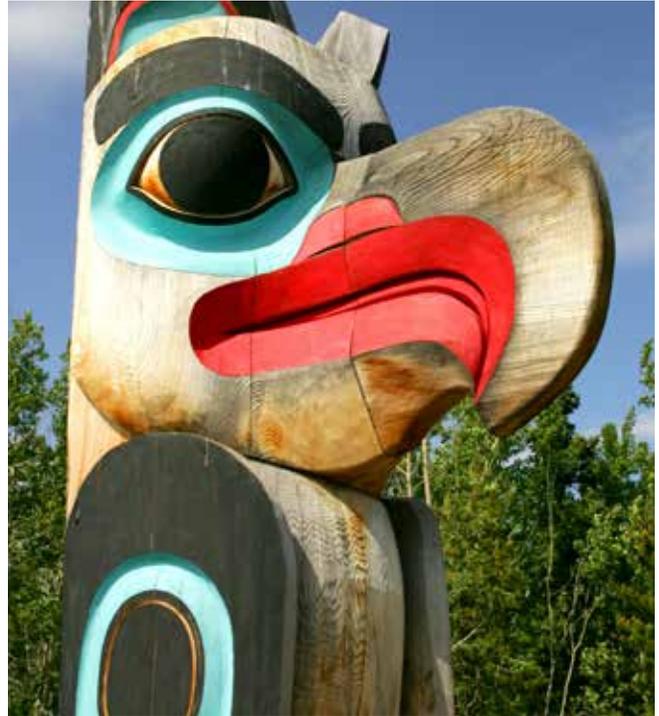
Once you've examined your own priorities, values, competencies, and other internal attributes, you are ready to begin reaching out according to your diversity priorities. As you do, keep in mind the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Identify key resources.** Use your diversity priorities to identify key stakeholders, audiences, partners, and advisors. Ensure that the groups you've prioritized are represented at each stage of your projects, and identify individuals who will play key leadership, decision-making, and communication roles.

### Reaching Out

Outdoor Outreach is an organization in San Diego County that empowers at-risk and underprivileged youth to make positive changes in their lives through comprehensive outdoor programming. Executive Director Chris Rutgers says that the most fruitful path to reaching its youth constituency is through strong partnerships with youth service agencies. Moreover, Outdoor Outreach is committed to hiring people from the communities in which the organization works. The leadership program trains community members to become instructors and staff. By cultivating an instructor base that comes from the same populations of youth it seeks to serve, Outdoor Outreach is able to demonstrate to new participants that it values their participation in programs and is genuinely interested in having them stay involved. Furthermore, this strategy means that Outdoor Outreach provides real opportunities for full and part-time employment, which many of the youth need. Having this pipeline for staffing is essential.

- ▶ **Do your homework.** What is the history of the constituency you've identified, especially as it relates to past experience with conservation and environmental groups? You should take special care to find out to what extent your organization may have worked with this group before. If it has, talk with the staff members who led those efforts to learn what worked, what didn't, and any key information you need for future work. The legacy of previous efforts will be a foundation for your work—offering opportunities on which to build, or putting up barriers that need to be addressed.



### Tribal Knowledge

There is a long and continuing history of injustices suffered by Native Americans—from land theft to exclusion from initiatives directly impacting them. It is not your organization's duty to remedy this history, but it is imperative that you are aware of and sensitive to this history.

It is equally helpful that you gain an understanding of basic demographic and cultural trends that exist within the Native American community. According to 2005 U.S. Census Bureau data, there are an estimated 4.5 million Native Americans, which is about 1.5 percent of the total U.S. population. About 85 percent of Native Americans are under 18, making them younger overall than the general U.S. population. Approximately 25 percent of people identifying as solely Native American are living in poverty. The Bureau of Indian Affairs holds about 55 million acres of land in trust for individual Native Americans.

For suggestions on working with U.S. tribes, see the Resources section.

- **Find out what you can learn from demographics, polling, and other research.** Recognize that demographic data may uncover themes, but consider the information as knowledge and context; avoid generalizations and assumptions about the individuals you meet from these groups.

### Putting Research to Work

For Mass Audubon, an organization committed to “protecting nature in Massachusetts for people and wildlife,” tailoring environmental education programming to the communities with which they work is a high priority. The staff use a two-step process to develop new programs. First, they research the demographics of the community they wish to engage. For example, when they decided to start a program in the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts, Mass Audubon learned that Lawrence was 89.7% Latino, had a median age of 30, and that the median income was \$14,000. (Most demographic information can be found online on city, county, or state websites and/or from the U.S. Census Bureau. It is important to check annually because demographics shift quickly.)



Second, before developing any programming, staff go into a new community to ask what residents need, and to start conversations. In Lawrence, they discovered that many residents valued community gardens because of the opportunities to grow hard-to-buy foods from different cultures. So Mass Audubon began by supporting a community garden. Once the project was underway, Mass Audubon found opportunities to discuss and grow native plants with Lawrence residents, and to learn how to talk about birds (a key focus area of the organization) in ways that connect with residents. For example, many birds in New England migrate from the Caribbean and Central America, where many of the Lawrence residents have roots. Mass Audubon also closely observed the ways community members used community gardens, and used that knowledge to inform the structure of their outdoor site and the types of programming offered.

► **Identify and develop relationships with individual and organization leaders among your priority constituencies.** Many of these constituencies have a long history of leadership. They are grounded, well-connected individuals and organizations, respected for the roles they play. For example, community centers and places of worship can be common congregating places for communities of color. Elders and long-time community residents may also be the most respected leaders in the community.

### The History of Debs Park, an Urban Nature Center



In the 1990s, National Audubon Society ran programs in L.A.'s Debs Park, situated in a predominantly Latino community, but did not have a physical structure in place. During this time, they hired a well-respected individual from the Latino community surrounding the park to research and talk with influential leaders in the community. They heard that many organizations and institutions over the years have come into the community, taken what they wanted (which may have included providing services for community members—but only temporarily), and left. Audubon realized that building trust was crucial to successfully engaging the Latino community. At the time, Audubon's local office was in Marina del Rey, an affluent part of Los Angeles. The organization's leaders decided to develop an Audubon Center at Debs Park to show their commitment to the community.

The new Audubon Center was not initially successful. In a survey conducted five years after

the center opened, 71 percent of community members said that they didn't even know it existed. Some of those who were aware of the nature center weren't sure it was open to them. Community relationships that had initially been formed in the 1990s had been lost.

Since that survey, Audubon staff members have worked to build better relationships with the surrounding community. They worked with local church leaders from All Saints Church and St. Ignatius Parish. They also found families and individuals to whom community members turn for leadership. In addition, they worked with local organizations and agencies, including the Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, the Los Angeles Public Library, Arroyo Vista Family Health Center, Churches of Los Angeles Coalition, and the City of Los Angeles, in numerous community events, such as festivals, health fairs, and meetings. These partners had already earned trust from the community. Audubon gained credibility and access to the community by building relationships with these well-respected institutions.

Now the Debs Park staff is present at community events (whether there is an environmental theme or not). Staff members talk to community members one-on-one, connect to community leaders, provide flyers in Spanish and English, partner with groups and schools that serve the community, hire community members who know the community and who speak Spanish, and emphasize individual contact.

By building relationships and listening, Audubon staffers have been able to create programs that are relevant to and that attract community members. For example, they found a higher participation rate when they actively engaged family groups rather than individuals. Audubon has found that connecting with community members with whom they have relationships has been crucial and creates a ripple effect. As Sarah Miggins, Center Director, stated, "Conservation is really big work, and we can't do it alone. If we don't involve the community, it is a lost opportunity." She has been building upon this idea for some time and she believes that an array of voices, perspectives, and experiences, in an environment conducive to honest interaction, leads to better ideas and decisions.

- **Take time to build relationships and learn about the community.** Before asking for anything, focus on building trust and familiarity and acting as a dependable partner. Learn about the community’s work, goals, programs, and the opportunities and challenges they’re facing. Identify areas for collaboration and use these as a starting point for your work. The most successful, sustained partnerships often result from connecting one-on-one with leading individuals and organizations before you have any specific goal or project in mind.

### Active Listeners

Environmental Learning for Kids is a Colorado-based organization that uses environmental experiences to cultivate a passion for science, leadership, and service among Colorado’s urban youth. The organization started its programming by listening to and learning from the community it intended to serve, mainly Latino and African-American populations based in Denver.

From the outset, Environmental Learning for Kids staff made no assumptions about what the community wanted. They listened to the community’s interests. They developed programs organically based on what they learned, and then honed them as they received feedback from participants. They quickly learned that they could break down some of the barriers to participation by providing transportation, food, and outdoor clothing and equipment. They also focused on building relationships. Fifteen years later, Environmental Learning for Kids’ commitment to listening and learning has resulted in a successful program that serves 6- to 24-year-olds and their families. Participants are just as committed to Environmental Learning for Kids as the organization is to them. Ninety-five percent of kids who sign up for programs stay for multiple years, and many stay connected for life. Some graduates are introducing their own children to the organization.

🌿 Step 14 (pp. 52-61) in the *Tools of Engagement* provides useful tips for how to be an active learner about others. Tools # 2-6 also provide planning documents that help to prepare to be active listeners, to record what you learn, and to act on the information to better engage the new audience.

### Using the *Tools of Engagement* to Create a Community Engagement Plan

The staff of Audubon Pennsylvania (Audubon PA) and National Audubon Society recently used the “Tools of Engagement” to help create a Community Engagement Plan to define and understand the needs and characteristics of the community in which Audubon is building a new nature center. The Community Engagement plan documents Audubon PA’s thoughtful and proactive process for developing a comprehensive knowledge-base about the surrounding Philadelphia community and the audiences most affected by Audubon’s conservation goals and strategies. The future home of the center (to be completed in 2017) is at the East Park Reservoir, which sits in the City of Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park and abuts the Strawberry Mansion community. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Strawberry Mansion currently has more than 22,000 residents. The residents of the community are 98 percent Black and 1 percent Hispanic/Latino with 34 percent of the population under the age of 20. The community engagement plan describes how Audubon PA’s deep familiarity with the local community informs its future partnership with other organizations. In addition, the staff is designing the programming in the new center to actively involve the local stakeholders from diverse racial/ethnic, economic, religious, and other varied backgrounds with the hope that it will empower them to feel ownership of the new center and Audubon’s conservation goals.



🌿 See Section C in the *Tools of Engagement* about the People Factor and especially Tool #2, Sizing Up Stakeholders, and Tool #5, Cheat Sheet–Conducting a Community Assessment to help develop a Community Engagement Plan prior to building a nature center or conservation project.



## EECapacity: Bringing New Voices, Ideas, and Innovation to Environmental Education

EECapacity, EPA's national environmental education training program, is helping groups with diverse experiences come together to strengthen and diversify the field of environmental education. For example, EECapacity's state consortia project brings youth development organizations together with environmental educators to create two-way learning opportunities with the goal of building a new cadre of effective educators. With a focus on environmental education activities taking place in urban areas, EECapacity is helping to share ideas about how to work collaboratively to address environmental and social challenges.



EECapacity believes that learning exchanges among all groups involved are crucial. Those groups include youth and community development professionals, environmental educators working in urban areas, and others who care about education, the environment, and community. Based on this equal-exchange principle, EECapacity's many programs—face-to-face workshops, conferences, grants programs to states, fellowships, online courses, learning communities, and social networking sites—provide opportunities for environmental educators and youth/community development professionals to share information and resources.

► **Plan your communications strategically and with care.** Work hard to frame your issues within the context of the concerns and needs of those you aim to serve. Despite significant support for conservation and environmental measures among people of color, low-income communities, new immigrants, the LGBTQ community, and women, many traditional messages and messengers miss the mark. Often the language, jargon, and framing of issues are perceived to be overly technical or scientific, lacking emotional resonance with people's daily lives. At times, the messages and messengers are perceived as representing a narrow demographic, one that makes these groups feel excluded from the "we" of the conservation movement.

With that in mind, be sure to use accessible language, and avoid acronyms and technical terms. This might mean using words such as "plants and animals" instead of "biodiversity" with people who aren't conservation professionals. Think critically about both your message and your messengers. How are your leaders, communications, and ideas likely to be perceived by the groups you seek to engage?

You may need to translate your materials and ensure that your team has the skills to communicate in an array of languages. Remember: With language comes culture. Terms that are innocuous or neutral in English can have pejorative connotations (or translate into negative meanings) in other languages. Part of your cultural competence is ensuring that members of your team can bring this cultural knowledge, as well as language fluency, to bear.



## The Messenger Can Make the Message

When the National Audubon Society wanted to recruit teachers from diverse backgrounds to attend Educators Week at Hog Island Audubon Camp, the program staff put out an announcement with a beautiful landscape photo, facts about the program, and bullet points citing studies about the need for more diversity among teachers. But it took several iterations of the flyer before people of color started to register. The key change in the flyer was adding a photo of Audubon's Vice President for Community Conservation and Education, an African American woman, along with a description of a session about diversity that she was leading.

Ultimately, five teachers from different ethnic/racial backgrounds attended the camp. One of the new recruits shared that seeing the photo of the VP inspired her application. She also admitted that she originally feared she would be the only person of color attending—a potential deterrent for many people who might want to participate in conservation programs.

***Getting the message—and the messenger—right can instill credibility and help you accomplish your goals.***

🌿 See Section C, Chapter 6 in the *Tools of Engagement* (pp. 62-70) to further develop your messaging strategy. Use Tool #21 (p. 154) as a planning tool.

## Talking Points

Many organizations are committed to making their messages and messengers more appropriate for their local constituencies. For example, the Audubon Society of Portland's summer camp employs staff members who are bilingual in Spanish and English to better connect their work to the Latino community. Outward Bound Adventures hires staff members and instructors with similar backgrounds and experiences as those they seek to engage. Having instructors and staff who reflect the people they serve sends an immediate dual message to the community: (1) we've thought about who you are and what you are dealing with and (2) we value people like you and promote you within our organization.



- ▶ **Consistently seek feedback from your new partners and ensure that diversity, inclusion, and equity metrics are integrated into evaluation.** Comfort and openness in giving and receiving feedback are all the more important when you're engaging across differences in culture, race, income, and other demographics. Given the power dynamics embedded in interactions among most U.S. cultural groups, honest feedback is essential. Misunderstandings and potential miscommunications tend to be more frequent when new, unfamiliar groups interact for the first time. Be prepared to invest time and effort into soliciting feedback and addressing issues that arise.

## Fellowship Programs Focused on Communities and Conservation

Toyota TogetherGreen is a partnership between Audubon and Toyota that funds community-based conservation projects. Initiated in 2008, Toyota TogetherGreen is committed to increasing diversity and inclusion in the conservation movement. The program actively recruits members of underrepresented communities for its **Conservation Leadership Program**, and all applicants must include plans to engage new and diverse audiences in their projects. A training session that brings all successful applicants together at the start of each funding period helps the fellows improve their skills in areas including equity, diversity, and inclusion. Audubon reports that the projects have successfully engaged people of color across the country: the available demographic data show that 40 percent of the participants are people of color. Even more telling, the data from the first five years of the program show that the projects that are able to successfully actively engage new audiences end up being more successful overall.

The **Community Climate Change Fellowship Program** is an exceptional professional network of leaders in conservation, climate change, and environmental education. It supports a mix of professionals working on the front lines of climate change. The program is a partnership of the North American Association for Environmental Education, Cornell University, Environmental Education Exchange, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and is modeled on Toyota TogetherGreen and the Biodiversity Education Leadership Institute. Fellows supported by the program are working across the Americas in communities of color, low-income urban neighborhoods, impoverished rural regions, and other places. They engage local communities, devise strategies to decrease people's impact on the environment, and lead efforts to help communities adapt to climate change. More than 45 percent of the pilot class of fellows selected in August 2014 identified themselves as people of color. All of the fellows are thinking about the relationship between climate and diversity, inclusion, and equity, and are working to share ideas among all community partners.

You will probably want to begin your diversity work by creating specific goals and indicators of progress. At regular intervals in your work, review these indicators or measures and ask yourself what they are telling you. Where did you succeed in meeting your goals? Where did you fall short of the marks you set? What lessons did you learn and how will you create a formal record of your evaluation so that you can build on those lessons in the future?

 Section D, Chapter 8 in the *Tools of Engagement* provides information about using logic models and developing evaluation strategies (pp. 87-102). Planning Tools # 30-34 (pp. 172-181) are also very helpful for achieving the results described in this section.

## Mini Case Studies



### Study #1

#### The Conservation Fund's Resourceful Communities

(North Carolina)

Resourceful Communities is a program of The Conservation Fund, a national organization that protects and conserves land across the United States. For almost two decades, Resourceful Communities has been working with communities of color and low-income communities, many of which are located in important, relatively intact ecosystems in rural areas. The program uses a “triple bottom line” approach that integrates environmental stewardship, sustainable economic development, and social justice.

In 2004, Resourceful Communities launched a project to protect wildlife habitat and rural landscapes around military bases in North Carolina. Because the lands around the bases have important environmental, economic, and social value, the project attracted a broad and unique set of partners, including conservation groups, social justice groups, agricultural agencies, and the U.S. Department of Defense. The project worked with farmers and landowners who were at risk of losing their lands to development to increase their income while also conserving their land.

Landowners of color and low-income landowners were selected for the project because they owned much of the land surrounding military bases, had an excellent track record of land stewardship, and were at the greatest risk of losing their land to development. Project partners also realized that keeping the people on the land was a much less expensive option than buying land to preserve it.

Over the course of the project, Resourceful Communities listened to more than 1,800 landowners of color and low-income landowners. The project staffers realized that these people faced unique challenges in accessing technical assistance and funding programs. Resourceful Communities identified the gaps and provided assistance and resources by:

- Developing a “toolkit” (in hard copy and electronic format) to distribute to farmers and landowners through one-on-one, small, and large-group meetings. The toolkit was organized so farmers and landowners could identify financial and technical assistance programs that are relevant to their properties;
- Providing one-on-one technical, legal, planning and other assistance, including one-on-one help to farmers and landowners in accessing conservation programs identified in the “toolkit”; and
- Developing educational materials for use in workshops. Educational packets included clearly written basic information on forestry, conservation easements, sustainable agriculture, property resolution issues, and legal rights related to the state's tobacco buyout. The need for easy-to-understand materials was identified early in the project due to the number of landowners who were elderly and/or had limited formal education.

### The project had many benefits, including:

- **Environmental:** The project prevented declines in water quality and protected more than 2,000 acres of farms, forests, wetlands, and other wildlife habitat in high-priority military operation zones.
- **Social:** Low-income landowners and landowners of color were able to access land conservation programs to protect and sustain their land ownership. Project partners were able to identify unique social, economic, and cultural issues that these communities face to help with the success of future efforts.
- **Economic:** The project strengthened farm operations and resulted in the creation or retention of more than 50 jobs through market-based efforts to increase revenues from working lands.

### Tips for the program's successful engagement of communities of color included:

- Listen first.
- Slow down and take your time.
- Put ego aside, be open to learning.
- Be thoughtful and sensitive in your approach.
- Meet people where they are.
- Listen to the problems and issues of the community, then figure out how your resources can help with those problems.
- Understand and value the wisdom, resources, and knowledge of the community. Community members are a wealth of helpful, local information.
- Be willing to use different measures of success. Many people of color are interested in protecting their land, but may have smaller-acreage holdings that are nonetheless critical to protecting natural resources. If you focus your efforts on large-acreage properties, you may exclude a critical portion of landowners.
- Remember that you are talking to people who care about the environment and have been land stewards for a long time. When it comes to caring about the land, we all want clean air, water, and land to live on. The community's forms of and reasons for environmental protection may be different from yours. Be skilled at identifying and appreciating all forms of conservation.
- If you make mistakes, be willing to address and learn from them, and then move forward. Mikki Sager, Vice President and Director of Resourceful Communities, mentioned that over the years she "made tons of mistakes" but continues (and encourages us all) to follow the mantra, "just do it."

Tips provided by Mikki Sager, Vice President and Director of Resourceful Communities

🌿 Sections B and C in the *Tools of Engagement* (pp. 31-70) will be helpful as they take you through the steps for understanding the problems and determining what the people you are interested in engaging need. Tools #9-27 are all especially useful for planning and accomplishing the outcomes described in this section.



## Study #2

### The Big Sur Land Trust

(Monterey County, California)

In 2007, the Big Sur Land Trust acquired Marks Ranch, an 816-acre property located just outside Salinas, California—a majority Latino community of farm workers. For 30 years, the Big Sur Land Trust had protected lands mainly in the coastal areas of Monterey County near affluent and predominantly white communities. They realized that there was a gap in their services and felt a responsibility to serve all of Monterey County, especially Salinas, which has some of the lowest per capita park space in California. Marks Ranch marked the first step in fulfilling The Big Sur Land Trust's then newly adopted strategic plan goals of "effectively connecting with underserved communities living and working within and around Monterey County's natural landscapes."

While the plan for the use of Marks Ranch acquisition is still being developed, the land is expected to provide badly needed open space for the Latino community, which largely depends on neighboring Toro Regional Park for outdoor recreation and family gatherings. The Big Sur Land Trust has been listening to the community about potential uses of the property and is working with its partners, including Monterey County Parks, Salinas Community School, Ventana Wildlife Society, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Monterey County, to provide additional educational and recreational opportunities to engage local youth and families.

Big Sur Land Trust's former Executive Director, Bill Leahy, says that the organization won't fully realize the benefits of this project for years to come. But he already sees signs of an expanding constituency of land stewards, more volunteers, more people committed to land conservation, and a larger active political block to support land and water conservation on California's central coast. Recent studies have also revealed that Marks Ranch is an important wildlife corridor for numerous species. Leahy acknowledges that acquiring Marks Ranch has been a show of faith that the Big Sur Land Trust is invested in the community. In turn, he is finding that the community is gradually accepting the Big Sur Land Trust as a valuable community member.

The following are some other ways that the Big Sur Land Trust is supporting diversity:

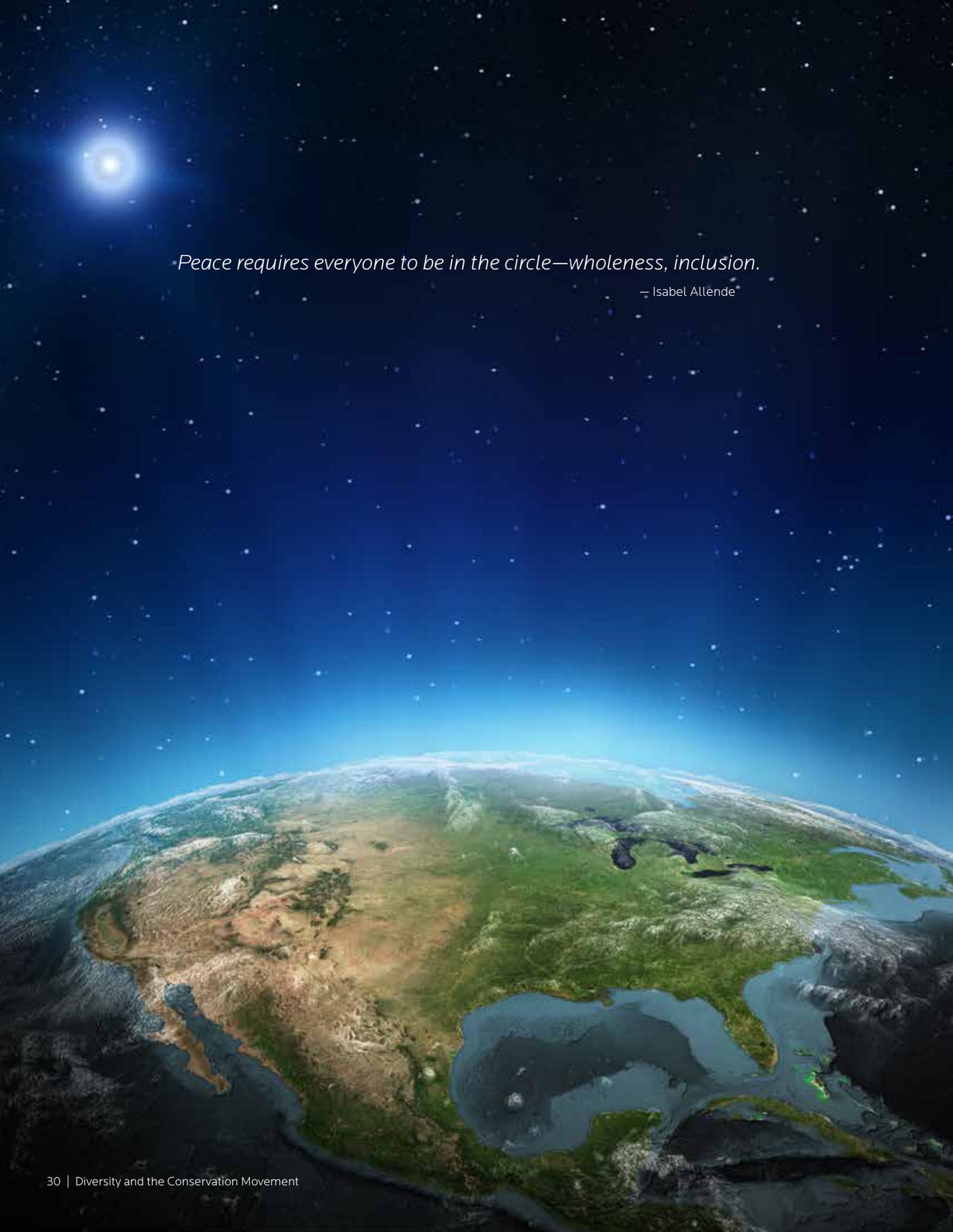
- The organization adopted a strategic plan after listening to and receiving strong feedback from the surrounding communities.
- The organization is exploring the creation of parks and recreation areas around an area known as Carr Lake, which will ultimately establish a central park in the heart of Salinas. After initial discussions with community leaders, there is broad agreement that Carr Lake can provide significant and diverse public benefits in a multi-use context, including restored wetlands and natural areas, developed recreation facilities, and compatible commercial or quasi-commercial uses that will serve to further the social and economic goals of the community.

- The organization appointed one community member, a Latina, to the board, and is looking to add more. However, convincing potential board candidates that the Big Sur Land Trust is committed to and providing value to the community has been challenging. The organization is finding that change in perception can be slow.
- During the 2008 Big Sur wildfire, many working families, a large proportion of them Latinos, lost their homes. The Big Sur Land Trust made a grant of \$100,000 to provide relief to the displaced families. A few board members were skeptical about the grant, expressing concern that the Land Trust might be construed as a relief organization and that the project was far outside of their mission. The grant, however, has brought significant goodwill and opportunities for deep collaboration on issues of long-term community viability and sustainability in Big Sur.

**Tips that helped the program successfully engage communities of color included:**

- Be willing to take risks, especially pursuing projects outside of your comfort zone.
- Share your toolkit of skills and expertise with the community and ask people how this might serve them and what projects they might want to see.
- Spend time getting to know people in communities that you have not served. Ask them for advice on the strategic direction of your organization.
- People aren't going to join your board, staff, and/or activities just because you want them to. You need to demonstrate the value you provide to their communities and inspire them to join.
- Building relationships takes time. Don't beat yourself up. Pace yourself.
- Implementing and investing in projects that are valuable to the community will help you connect to the community.

Tips provided by Bill Leahy, former Executive Director, Big Sur Land Trust



*Peace requires everyone to be in the circle—wholeness, inclusion.*

— Isabel Allende

## 6

## Think small, big, and forever

*We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

The challenges that people and the planet face in the 21st century are enormous. Scientists warn us that the trajectory of climate change needs to be reversed, within the next decade if not sooner, to avert catastrophic impacts for all life on Earth. Environmental indicators across the globe show dire straits for species, ecosystems, and millions of people, many who already lack access to clean water, clean air, and uncontaminated food.

The need for a much more diverse array of active and engaged conservation leaders in communities across the globe grows stronger each day. While this work can at times feel daunting, we encourage you to:

**Think small:** Break down the work into manageable, doable steps.

**Think big:** Connect your efforts to other work taking place across the country and globe, and network with colleagues who can support what you do. You're not alone and the work you are doing is critical to meeting the challenges facing conservation and seizing all possible opportunities.

**Think forever:** There is no final endpoint in the task of making the conservation movement—and the world in general—more diverse, more inclusive, and more equitable. Like most things we care about deeply, this work will go on forever. And it will take all of us.





## Resources

The following resources are organizations and information that can help with engaging new constituencies.

### **Organizations that Can Help with Diversity Efforts**

#### *Center for Diversity and the Environment*

The Center for Diversity and the Environment racially and ethnically diversifies the environmental movement by developing leaders, diversifying institutions, and building community. The organization conducts equity audits of organizations and institutions, provides technical assistance in diversity efforts, and offers trainings, workshops, and forums.

[cdeinspires.org](http://cdeinspires.org)

#### *Center for Whole Communities*

The Center for Whole Communities creates a more just, balanced, and healthy world by exploring, honoring, and deepening the connections among land, people, and community. The group offers retreats and workshops for environmental professionals and activists in a new land movement that integrates conservation, health, justice, spirit, and relationship.

[wholecommunities.org](http://wholecommunities.org)

#### *First Peoples Worldwide*

First Peoples Worldwide is a non-profit organization dedicated to building bridges between indigenous communities and a variety of sectors, including corporations, governments, academia, NGOs and investors. First Peoples Worldwide uses traditional Indigenous knowledge to address several of today's most pressing issues worldwide, from climate change to food security.

[firstpeoples.org](http://firstpeoples.org)

#### *Green for All*

Green for All is an organization with a mission to use green jobs to lift Americans out of poverty. According to the group, "we work in collaboration with the business, government, labor, and grassroots communities to create and implement programs that increase quality jobs and opportunities in green industry – all while holding the most vulnerable people at the center of our agenda." The group's website includes case studies and resources for green entrepreneurs, educators, organizers and others.

[Greenforall.org](http://Greenforall.org)

#### *Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals Environmental Education Outreach Program (EEOP)*

The Institute's EEOP program conducts programs for tribal youth and provides information and resources for tribal and non-tribal environmental educators around tribal environmental education.

[www4.nau.edu/eeop/](http://www4.nau.edu/eeop/)

EEOP Newsletters: [www4.nau.edu/eeop/newsletter/index.asp](http://www4.nau.edu/eeop/newsletter/index.asp)

#### *Multicultural Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI)*

Housed at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, MELDI aims to increase diversity in environmental organizations as well as in the broader environmental movement by promoting greater diversity in leadership. To this end, MELDI's faculty and staff conduct research on environmental workforce dynamics and provide resources to help enhance the leadership and career development opportunities available to students, activists, and environmental professionals.

[meldi.snre.umich.edu](http://meldi.snre.umich.edu)

### ***National Coalition Building Institute***

Since 1984, The National Coalition Building Institute has been working to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression throughout the world. NCBI employs a proactive strategy that provides leadership development training to individuals and organizations who want to build their skills around diversity and inclusion. [ncbi.org](http://ncbi.org)

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*We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community—and this nation.*

— Cesar Chavez

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## About the Authors



### Chandra Taylor Smith

Chandra Taylor Smith heads Audubon's nationwide network of 41 nature Centers and more than 450 local Chapters as well as Audubon's education department and flagship corporate partnership, Toyota TogetherGreen. Since she started at

Audubon in 2012, Chandra has established a sustainable structure for launching the cross flyway strategy, creating Bird-friendly Communities (BFC).

Chandra comes to Audubon after serving as Vice President for Research for the Council for Opportunity in Education and Director of The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, where she led Pell's mission to encourage policymakers, educators, and the public to improve education opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation, and disabled college students. Prior to her tenure at the Pell Institute, she was the first Executive Director of College Summit Chicago (opening the first regional office of the national non-profit College Summit) and then served as Deputy Director of the Postsecondary Education and Student Development Department and District Director for AVID at Chicago Public Schools under CEO Arne Duncan.

During her doctoral studies, Chandra completed her dissertation, "Earth Blood and Earthling Existence: A Methodological Study of Black Women's Writings and their Implication for a Womanist Ecological Theology," which reflected on the intersections of spirituality and ecological and social justice and their implications of being connected to, healed by and creating stewardship for the environment.



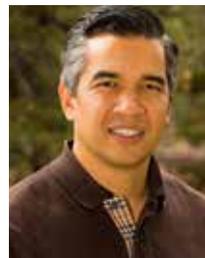
### Tony DeFalco

Tony DeFalco is the Living Cully Ecodistrict Coordinator at Verde, coordinating the nation's first equity driven ecodistrict designed to re-interpret sustainability as an anti-poverty strategy. His expertise in community economic development,

environmental protection and sustainability spans 15 years of working locally and nationally in environmental advocacy, coalition building and policy advocacy. His current focus includes redevelopment of a landfill into a park in a low-income neighborhood in Portland and strengthening communities of color and low income communities in deriving economic benefit from environmental investments.

He is a founding board member of the Center for Diversity and the Environment and serves as a trustee of Earthjustice. He also serves on the Port of Portland's Citizen Advisory Committee and the Portland Development Commission's Neighborhood Economic Development Council.

Tony holds a master's degree in Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation from Humboldt State University and a bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. Tony is an avid birdwatcher and leads Feathers of Color, a birding group for people of color. He lives in Portland with his wife, Molly.



### Marcelo Bonta

Marcelo Bonta is a Green 2.0 Advisory Board Member, a member of the Diverse Environmental Leaders Speakers Bureau, Environmental Leadership Program Senior Fellow and a TogetherGreen Conservation Fellow. His work has

been featured in *The New York Times*, *High Country News*, *The Oregonian*, *Prism Magazine*, *Colors NW*, *Sustainlane.com*, *Saving Land Magazine*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education Magazine*, *Sustainable Industries Magazine* and other publications. He has delivered more than 70 talks, including keynote speeches at the International Congress for Conservation Biology, Association of Partners for Public Lands Partnership Convention, Portland State University, and Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Annual Conference.

Marcelo previously worked on biodiversity conservation, land use, and policy issues for numerous organizations, including: Defenders of Wildlife, the National Park Service, and Massachusetts Audubon Society. Marcelo received his Master's Degree from Tufts University and Bachelor's Degree from Yale University. In 2008, he co-wrote with Charles Jordan a visionary article, titled "Diversifying the American Environmental Movement." He is a published author in the book, *Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement*, the *Land Trust Alliance's Special 25th Anniversary Issue*, *Grist Magazine*, and the journal, *Conservation Biology*.

Marcelo's inspiration for making the world a better place comes from his two daughters Stella and Kyra. Their laughter, joy, honesty, and multi-racial make-up provide him with hope that the world can and will be a better and more inclusive place by the time they are adults.

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